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STARBURST

SCIENCE FANTASY IN TELEVISION, CINEMA AND GRAPHICS

Volume 2, Number 3

Edited and designed by Dez Skinn

Associate Editor: Alan McKenzie
 Art Editor: Chas Farnsworth
 Art Assistance: Graham De Lucy
 Production: John Kelly
 Advertising: Top Team Ltd
 Distribution: Comag

Writers this issue:
 John Brosnan
 Tony Crowley
 Phil Edwards
 John Fleming
 Tise Vahimagi

Publisher: Stan Lee

At the biggest convention this year—the 37th World Science Fiction Convention, Brighton—I bumped into a gentleman named Douglas Adams. Shame on you if the name means nothing, but it soon will.

Among his varied credits, Douglas Adams is the man responsible for BBC Radio's Hitch Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy series. This fact could doubtless explain his query of why Starburst had so far ignored the programme (a sentiment echoed by at least 42 of our readers).

Far from being a deliberate move, but rather a matter of difficulty obtaining visual material on a radio show, this situation is finally rectified this month. Nice one, Doug.

Television fantasy is also well represented this time around as we cover no less than three series, Quatermass, Sapphire and Steel and the ever-popular Dr Who.

Fans of the latter who have been constantly bombarding us with mail will be pleased to hear that we've a new magazine devoted from cover to cover to the Doctor's exploits. A cross between Starburst and House of Hammer, with its combination of features and comic strips, the most amazing thing about the magazine is its frequency. Believe it or not, it will be weekly, and only 12p.

Issue one of Doctor Who Weekly goes on sale October 10th featuring a profile of the late William Hartnell, a Daleks feature, the evolution of Dr Who, competitions, pin-ups, three comic strips, and more.

Seeing is believing, so grab it while it's there!

Best *Dez Skinn*
 Dez Skinn.

The Return of Quatermass4
 Absent from our television screens for more than twenty years, BBC's Professor Bernard Quatermass returns courtesy of Euston Films and Sir John Mills. Starburst regular John Brosnan reviews the new series and asks whether the Professor has suffered in the change of channels.

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QUATERMASS

After a twenty year retirement, Quatermass returns to our tv screens in the final chapter of the four part saga. John Brosnan examines the £1.5 million series and compares it with its predecessors.



Professor Bernard Quatermass (Sir John Mills) is confronted by an armed security guard.

Chaos rules. Armed gangs battle day and night in the streets of London, there are dead bodies lying everywhere. The economy has collapsed, fuel is in short supply and the youth of the world are obsessed with a futile new religion that promises them transportation to another planet where all their problems will be solved. Is this the end of civilisation? Is there no one who can save the day? Yes, there is... for out of the mists of time comes none other than Professor Bernard Quatermass, the man who saved the world three times back in the 1950s and thrilled the British tv viewing public, courtesy of the BBC, while doing so.

Quatermass made his first tv appearance back in July 1953 and was played by Reginald Tate in the BBC serial titled *The Quatermass Experiment*. He reappeared, due to popular demand, in October 1955 in *Quatermass 2*, though that time he was played by John Robinson (Tate

had died earlier in the year). And in December 1958 in *Quatermass and the Pit* he was played by Andre Morell (sadly both Robinson and Morell died recently). This time he is played by Sir John Mills and is presented not by the BBC but by ITV, though the actual makers of the serial are Euston Films, the same people who bought you *The Sweeney* and

This new serial has a genuine Quatermass feel to it.

Danger UXB among others. The BBC originally commissioned *Quatermass* some years ago but for some typically peculiar BBC reason (no doubt covered by the Official Secrets Act) decided not to go ahead with it.

Despite all the changes, however, one important factor remains the same - the name of the author, Nigel Kneale, and as a result the new serial has the genuine *Quatermass* feel to it. It may be set in the

future but in a way watching it is like taking a time travel trip back to the 1950s - and that isn't to suggest that Kneale hasn't progressed in 20 years. On the contrary *Quatermass*, like its predecessors, very much reflects contemporary times. But there is a definite 1950s feel to its pace and style that sets it apart from current tv shows and, as far as I'm concerned, this makes it all the more appealing. Perhaps this ingredient will also enable younger viewers who never had the opportunity to see any of the 1950s serials to understand what the fuss was about all those years ago. It will be interesting to see if this serial recreates any of the excitement that the originals did among the nations' viewers - after all, when *Quatermass* first appeared he was something of an original but since then sf/horror has been fairly regular fare on television.

Quatermass certainly begins with a jolt. No sooner has Professor Quatermass

alighted from a taxi that is covered in wire mesh than he is attacked by a gang of young thugs who announce they are going to remove his teeth. The hard way. But Quatermass is rescued by a young scientist (*Simon McCorkindale*) who coincidentally is heading for the same place as Quatermass. They are both to appear on a tv program celebrating the latest American and Soviet co-venture in space, the linking of two orbiting vehicles to form a giant space station.

Quatermass, who has been living in retirement in Scotland for a number of years is rather shocked by conditions in London. "I had no idea it was *this* bad," he says as they drive past barricaded slums covered with slogans saying "KILL THE KING" and then arrive at the heavily guarded entrance to the tv studio which has a sign reading "STOP OR SUFFER". What can have caused this breakdown of society, one wonders.

The cause makes its presence felt during the tv programme. Just after Quatermass has embarrassed his hosts by making an impassioned plea to the viewers for help in locating his missing grand-daughter, the tv screens reveal an alarming scene being transmitted from space. The American-Soviet space station is being torn apart by some mysterious force!

Quatermass accompanies the scientist to his secluded country establishment

where he lives with his wife (*Barbara Kellerman*) and their two young daughters. Despite the collapse of civilisation around them they have managed to sustain an idyllic family relationship, a situation that Quatermass finds reassuring. The establishment itself is a beguiling mixture of old and new science—a crumbling 18th Century observatory flanked by two huge radio telescopes. And nearby is an even older relic, a circle of small stones which may or may not have served some astronomical purpose 5000 years ago. A few miles away is a larger stone circle that resembles Stonehenge and it is here that Quatermass comes face to face with the full horror of what is going on.

This occurs when a party of young

Buried alien artifacts are exerting an influence over man.

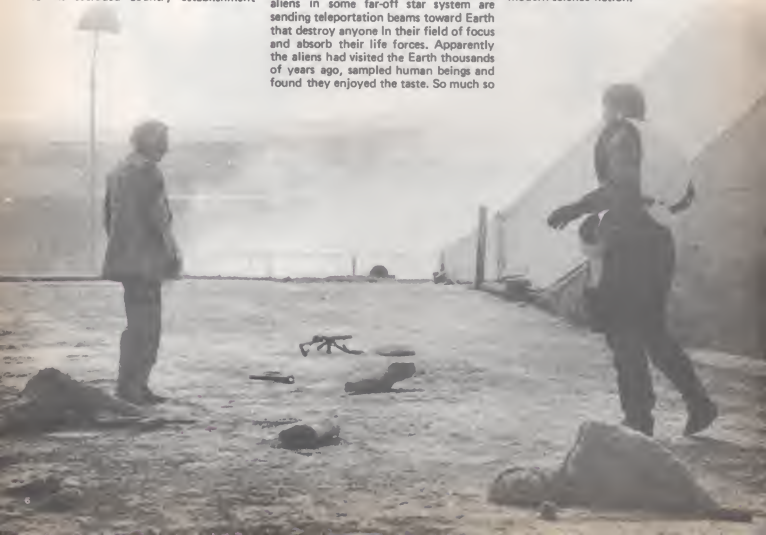
people, guided by ley lines—the mysterious lines of energy that are supposed to connect prehistoric monuments—enter the stone circle and are zapped by a burst of blinding white light. Their fanatical friends, who didn't reach the circle in time, claim they have been transported to another planet. But Quatermass finds a lone survivor who is hideously burned. Obviously the white light is far from harmless...

Quatermass eventually deduces that aliens in some far-off star system are sending teleportation beams toward Earth that destroy anyone in their field of focus and absorb their life forces. Apparently the aliens had visited the Earth thousands of years ago, sampled human beings and found they enjoyed the taste. So much so

that they left special beacons buried deep in the ground at certain places around the world. These beacons are programmed to guide the teleportation beams when it is time for the next harvest of humanity.

Over the years these places have assumed special unconscious significance to people, causing them to mark the area above with stones and other objects. The buried beacons also exert an influence over the young, inducing an excitement which releases a specific chemical scent that in turn activates the beam. The beacons are not just buried under ancient monuments like Stonehenge but also under places like Wembley Stadium... which, Kneale amusingly suggests, might explain all that football hooliganism.

There are a lot of similarities between this plot and the last Quatermass serial *Quatermass and the Pit*. In both stories buried alien artifacts are exerting a malign influence over humanity and in the end the threat can only be overcome by someone giving their life to destroy the alien force. And once again, as with all the Quatermass stories, the underlying theme is that of possession—of human beings taken over and controlled by an outside force. It's an old idea with its roots deep in ancient mythology and superstition but Kneale's special trick has always been to take the concept and ingeniously dress it up in the trappings of modern science fiction.



In *The Quatermass Experiment* it was a mindless organism floating in space that took over the body of an unfortunate astronaut; in *Quatermass 2* people are taken over by slug-like creatures that explode out of small projectiles sent from outer space, and in *Quatermass and the Pit* the inhabitants of London fall under the control of a long dead race of Martian insects. Variations on just one theme they maybe, but Kneale never fails to make

Encounters—Spielberg's visitors from outer space come bearing smiles and good wishes when Kneale's aliens simply want to use the human race as flavouring for some celestial banquet.

Quatermass can also be considered as a bitter reaction by a member of an older generation which seems to belong to a failings of an irrational younger generation who seems to belong to a different species. Naturally, in the tradition of sf, these failings are exaggerated to the nth degree. Thus muggers and juvenile delinquents are transformed into armed gangs, and the hippy movement with its emphasis on mysticism becomes the lemming-like Planet Religion. (I should point out that the serial was originally written for the BBC over 5 years ago when hippies were still numerous.) It's very much a story of Age versus Youth and significantly it's the old people who are impervious to the alien influence and manage to retain their rationality. It is this that enables them to save the day, though at the very end Youth and Age are symbolically reconciled when *Quatermass'* granddaughter helps him destroy the aliens.

In anyone else's hands this might have

turned into a tedious and reactionary reflection of an aging man's predictable fears and resentments but Kneale's natural instincts as a born entertainer remain in control and prevent the preaching from getting in the way of the story. There is also the suggestion of wry, if black, sense of humour at work too that indicates Kneale is well aware of the game he is playing and is being careful not to overstep the mark.

Apart from the scriptwriter one must also congratulate the members of the Euston Films production team who have succeeded in making *Quatermass* look much more expensive than it really was to make. The whole four hours of film cost just 1.5 million pounds yet overall it has the appearance of a multi-million

A strong streak of pessimism runs through *Quatermass*.

each variation uniquely fascinating.

Also consistent with the previous *Quatermass* serials is the strong streak of pessimism that runs through *Quatermass* and in fact here it more pronounced than ever before. Nigel Kneale apparently views both humanity and the Universe itself with a profound sense of unease. This attitude has always been characteristic of British science fiction (from Wells through to Wyndham, Ballard and Aldiss, British sf writers have tended to look on the dark side. American sf tends to be optimistic). Just compare Kneale's aliens with Steven Spielberg's in *Close*

Quatermass can be regarded as a triumph for all concerned.

production. Even the space sequences look good yet according to Euston's general manager John Goodman less was spent on the model effects than Bond producer Cubby Broccoli would "... spend on cigars in a week". Amazingly, the whole radio telescope establishment, including the two huge dishes and the 18th Century observatory, was all a mock-up created by Euston's art department and for a relatively small amount of money. "Our biggest problem," said Goodman "was finding someone who wanted the two giant telescope dishes when we finished filming. There's not much demand for such things."

Quatermass can be regarded as a triumph for all concerned and one hopes that it will lead to further collaborations between Nigel Kneale and Euston Films. And one trusts that those responsible at the BBC for letting the fourth *Quatermass* serial slip through their fingers are hanging their heads in shame.

Opposite: A scene from the climactic finale of *Quatermass*. Above: The children of the planet religion parade gaily through the countryside. Below right: Kapp (Simon McCorkindale) and Chire (Barbara Kellerman) confront a security guard.



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Edited by Gerry Tumbull

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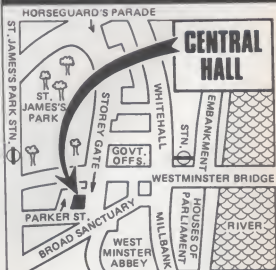
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In the "creative teamwork" world of film-making, the boundaries between who does what on certain scenes in the area of special effects sometimes become blurred. Some prefer not to blow their own trumpet nor take unwarranted and undeserved credit. Others are only too eager to accept the praise which rightly belongs to others.

One name that has cropped up frequently over the years, usually listed under the vague heading of "Special Effects", is that of Roger Dicken. He is, however, more than just another special effects technician. Roger Dicken is a designer, a sculptor, a model maker, an animator and a manipulator of his creations. Moreover, he is also a devotee of fantasy, a collector of memorabilia and a mine of technical information.

Starburst recently called to see him at his Berkshire home and studio, fittingly named after the magical world created by Edgar Rice Burroughs, Pelucidar, to talk to him about his career, his work on *Alien*, and his plans to go to work in the United States.

Dicken was born in Portsmouth, England in 1939. A meeting with animation master Ray Harryhausen in 1960 inspired him to try his hand in the field of special effects. Always a fan of horror and fantasy movies, Dicken used to spend hours at school making models of and drawing monsters.

Doubting the value of formal art-school training, Dicken turned his hand to a number of jobs, finally landing a job as a fill-in prop maker at the Royal Court Theatre. This was followed by a period at the BBC in the scenic department, assisting on the studio floor.

After staying with the BBC for a time Dicken secured a position at Garry Anderson's *Thunderbirds* studio.

Starburst: What were your contributions to the *Thunderbirds* series?

Dicken: I was part of a team making the *Thunderbirds* tv show, under Derek Meddings. I also worked on the feature film *Thunderbirds Are Go*, and I made the fire-spitting rock snakes. I was working on one of my own weird creatures in the lunch hour, a one-eyed monster. The next day I discovered that

"I used to make all the miniature props for *Thunderbirds*."

they were going to have a one-eyed snake in the feature movie, and I thought that was very strange!

I had a little department of my own, a little nook in the studio workshop, and I used to make all the little miniature props that were used on the special effects set. Things like miniature milestones, hay ricks, road signs, barriers, all that sort of thing. Most of the big models were made

Starburst talks to the man behind the monsters on such fantasy offerings as *Thunderbirds Are Go*, *When Dinosaurs Ruled the Earth*, *Warlords of Atlantis* and *Alien* in this interview by Phil and Leone Edwards.

DICKEN'S ALIENS



A group of hapless travellers are menaced by the Zarg monster in *Warlords of Atlantis* (1978).

outside by independent firms, but they did have a model workshop which I was involved with, but I never made any of the rocket ships. The first job I had was building one of the *Thunderbirds* hangers. It was like a test to see what I could do on my own. I preferred working in my own little workshop, with its shelves of miniature props and bits.

How did you become involved in 2001?

While I was working on *Thunderbirds*, an artist named Joy Seddon, who had worked in the puppeteers department, had seen a roll of animation that I had done. She was working on 2001 *A Space Odyssey* and told Stanley Kubrick about my work and that I liked monsters. At that point, because 2001 was such a

whacky production and they weren't sure what they were going to have in it, Kubrick was considering including aliens. The 2001 production office asked me to go along and show them this reel I had done. They liked it, but at this stage they still weren't sure about having monsters in the film. While I was there I had a look around and got chatting to the production department and Victor Linden, one of the producers. I was given a job with Joy Seddon working on the moon terrains, making the plaster lunar landscapes where the spacecraft land etc. I was on the film for about a year.

How big were those model lunar landscapes?

Quite big. About fifteen feet square.

So you never got to make any aliens for 2001?

Well, there was a secret period where I was carving these human like creatures out of balsa wood that were going to have

little twinkling lights on them, but that took a dive when one of the union people blew the whistle and it was discovered that I was carving wood! I was pleased with my work on 2001, but it wasn't as satisfying as making a monster. A landscape thing can be a pretty mundane thing to work on. I really prefer the

"They asked me if I wanted to make a vampire moth."

more creative side.

What was the first film where you had control of all the special effects?

My next film, *The Blood Beast Terror*.

The producer, Tony Tenser, got in touch with me and asked me if I wanted to make a blood sucking vampire moth. It was directed by Vernon Sewell who, I thought, had very little feeling for the picture. I literally did all the effects on

that. It was the first free-lance job I had taken on.

On your next film, When Dinosaurs Ruled the Earth, you worked with animator Jim Danforth. How did that come about?

A producer at Hammer Films, Aida Young, had heard about my animation reel. She called me up and told me they were making *Dinosaurs* as a follow up to *Million Years BC*. She liked the reel of animation, but I told her I didn't think I was up to doing effects of this sort, as all the jobs I had done up to that point had cut down the time I could spend on my own experimentation. So it evolved that she brought in Jim Danforth from America, and I assisted Jim on the film. We got on well together, and discovered we had a lot in common, especially our love of the genre. We are good friends now, but at the end of *Dinosaurs* we did have a little bit of friction, but then we had been locked up in the workshop for a year, so that's bound to cause a bit of trouble. Dave Allen the animator, also worked on *Dinosaurs*. They're the people I'll be seeing when I go to America next. I feel that in this field, England doesn't have a lot to offer, though I have turned down three pictures recently. Despite the fact that most of the effects pictures like *Star Wars*, *Superman* and *Alien* were made over here, I feel there is much more happening over there.

"Scars of Dracula was basically a cheap film."

You worked on another Hammer film Scars of Dracula. What effects did you contribute to that?

I did the vampire bats and the bubbling acid baths, and the guy hung up on a hook. This last one was achieved by making a metal bar with a bicycle seat on the bottom which the actor sat on and placing a strap around the actor's chest. I made a rubber hook tip which was grafted on to his chest, so the final impression was that he was suspended by this hook. The end of the film has Chris Lee impaled on a steel rod which is struck by lightning. I did this by using hollow railings. One of these was slid along a wire so that it hit Chris Lee in the stomach, and then he grabbed it. We had some front projection material attached to the rod, then the lighting boys rigged up a camera and the appropriate light was shone on it. I had a small detonator on the rod so when the lighting was supposed to strike it, you would get the sparking effect, and the light on the front projection material made the rod glow red.

That sounds a very similar process to that used for the light sabres on Star Wars. Yes. And that was back in 1969. It was basically a cheap film.

Perhaps you are best known for your



Opposite above:
Dickens created
the special
effects for *The
Blood Beast
Terror* (1967).
Opposite below:
A diving bell is
attacked by a
giant octopus in
*Warlords of
Atlantis* (1978).

Left: *The Zarg* from *Warlords
of Atlantis*. Below: Dickens
created and operated the
model bats in *Sears of Dracula*
for *Hammer* in 1970.



film was finished. They had only a couple of shots to do, but I'd had enough.

On the technical side, what did you make the moulds out of for the creatures in Warlords?

These were made in clay and cast in plaster, but I make them up mostly as I go along. That's why I couldn't work on the alien in *Alien*.

At what point of Alien's production were you brought in?

Right at the beginning, back in February

"I constructed and manipulated the small creatures in *Alien*."

1978. I was originally engaged to make a big creature and I got involved in it, but I soon found that *Alien* was a "board room" picture. One man wants a foot this way, another man wants a leg this way or a tail that way, and I can't really work like that. However, I did construct and manipulate the two smaller alien life forms, the "face hugger" and the alien that bursts out of John Hurt's chest. The face hugger was from Dan O'Bannon's design and the chest buster was a combination of ideas from one of Giger's drawings, and Ridley Scott's ideas and mine as I built it. However, I couldn't work like that and sent a letter to the production office, and told them I didn't want to carry on and make the large alien creature, though I did complete the smaller alien elements. After that they got a whole workshop onto the project including Carlo Rambaldi. What it cost them, I don't know. But personally I think what they got in the end was disappointing. I think they blew it. I feel that if they had left me to it they would have got what they wanted.

Well, without getting into the artistic pros and cons, can we discuss your contributions to the film?

Sure. The overall look of the chest buster was this long banana shaped thing with a head on it from the Giger drawing.

"I made various models of the Alien."

I made various models of it. One afternoon Ridley Scott came over here, and over cups of tea we literally constructed this thing by trying different heads with different tails and so on, and it was finally agreed that that was what it would finally look like. So I married the head up with the body and the flexible tail that I designed. I gave it moving gills on the side, a moving jaw, and the chest of the creature would breathe and so on. Time was running out at this point and Ridley had to come to some decision. The chest buster was an activated model, I couldn't get my hand inside it to operate it, it was too small. It's an articulated foam model on a handgrip and I had air tubes coming off it working all the appendages. I had it burst up through the

work on the *Burroughs* film, *Land That Time Forgot*, and the spin off *Warlords of Atlantis*. How did you get involved with those projects?

Producer John Dark asked me to come up with something that was an alternative

"I turned down *At the Earth's Core*."

to animation. I came up with the puppetised creature thing, which is something I'd thought about years ago. The producers liked it and that's what we used in the picture. I worked for months making those models out here in the

workshop. I took them into the studio for shooting and then the other special effects people would look at them and say "Oh, puppets, we can handle them", but forgetting that they didn't think of the ideal I wasn't happy with what happened on that film and turned down both the next one, *At the Earth's Core* and also *People That Time Forgot*. So how did you get involved in *Warlords of Atlantis*?

John Dark showed me the script which I thought looked like fun to do, and as they say, "time heals". However, similar things happened again with the effects people. I walked off the set before the





false fibreglass chest, physically turning it by hand and had other people working the air tubes to give it its "life." The special effects people on the film insisted that my model wouldn't burst through the chest, so I had to make a solid model from my moulds which they fitted on a cantilever. On the day of shooting, they

tried this out. It burst through the false chest, which was full of guts, but would not go through the T-Shirt that Hurt was wearing. What you did finally see come through was my model. No catapults or levers, I held it and pushed it up through the chest and the T-Shirt.

It is the one shot in the film where you actually get to see the alien fully, without the use of special or strobe lighting. I built it to stand up to the work and the camera. Hurt was going through extreme discomfort, lying under this false chest, built up all around with blood and guts from the abattoir. To me though, the

"To me, the Alien looks like a porpoise."

creature looks like a porpoise, I'm not really happy with the finished thing. I had a different idea as to how it should come out of Hurt's chest. The special effects department were telling Ridley it should burst out like a bullet, but what I visualised was that it should burst its hands out, and then squirm its way out of the chest. To me that would have been much more horrifying.

Something like the birth of the Ymir in 20 Million Miles to Earth?

Something like that.

Would you have animated that, rather than use an articulated model? I think I would have attempted

something like that. For the shot across the table where the alien scoots across it, I lay under the table on a trolley with my arm up and holding the alien. The table was split in two with one side higher than the other, with the camera on the high side. The special effects boys yanked me out on the trolley under the table, knocking all the cups and saucers over as it went speeding across the table top. Alan Bryce, one of the effects technicians rigged up an air hose to the special tail which made it lash about and gave it that much more "life".

What about the face hugger which is the first alien form we see after it has burst out of the egg and attached itself to Hurt's face?

That was to O'Bannon's design I think, but as I say, there were so many people on that film. I do know that O'Bannon drew something up and I built it. I would have liked it to have been a little more scaly and I would like to have had little barbs like rose thorns on the legs and down the tail. As the alien was so self-preserving, you shouldn't be able to get a hold of the thing. I felt that in the film this wasn't particularly well brought over.

Perhaps this was compensated for by the acidic blood that spurts out when they try to cut into the legs of the creature. Certainly that thing clinging to Hurt's face is an horrific image.

Above: More blood and gore from *The Blood Beast Terror* courtesy of Roger Dicken. Below: The giant octopus attacks a ship in *Warlords of Atlantis*.



Image, yes. But I didn't feel they showed its strength enough.

Did you do the alien coming out of the egg?

Well, I was down to do that scene. Ridley was going to use some footage from the Oxford Experimental Film Unit of embryo chickens forming, showing blood filling the capillaries and so on, and superimpose it over the egg interior, but that wasn't used. I don't know what came

"We used surgical jelly to get the slimy, gooey effects."

out of the egg or who did it, it happens so fast.

Did you do the scene where Hurt is lying on the table and the Alien shifts around and gets a better grip with its tail?

The tail was moved with a wire, that's all. We had some problems that day. Ridley wanted to fill the sacs on either side of the hugger with slime. They had a big tub of this stuff imported from overseas, possibly to use in other scenes as well. When I put it in the sacs, it clogged up the air tubes which made the sacs pulsate. We used surgical jelly on the hugger to get the slimy, gooey effects. There was quite a lot in that film that was shot or planned, and that for one reason or another wasn't used. Giant cocoons suspended in the chains of the cooling shafts where the alien kept one of the

characters alive to feed on. Another one where the alien comes down from the chains like a giant grasshopper and snatches up one of the characters, and a scene where the alien rips out the heart of one of the characters in a very fast sequence. All that's left of the three day cycle of the Alien in the story is when Harry Dean Stanton finds that shred of alien skin.

I must say that I'm pleased for Fox that the film is a success. The point I want to make though, is that I wasn't

particularly happy with my work on the film. I just don't want to roll around in all the glory, now that the film is a success. Finally, on Alien, I would like to say that I would have liked my credit to have been "manipulated" as well as "co-designed and made by". I simply want the credit for what I did.

Well, after Alien, what are your plans? Getting organised to go to America, experimenting with my own projects, and working on a script. An occult horror story, with lots of effects!

Above: Roger Dicken and his model Zaarg from Warlords of Atlantis (1978). Right: Dicken and the models he co-designed and constructed for Alien. The Face-Hugger (left) and the Chest-Burster (right).



Tise Vahimagi looks at the latest fantasy offering from ATV which stars Joanna (The New Avengers) Lumley and David (Invisible Man) McCallum.



Alonely, remote house in the country. In the kitchen a young boy works over his homework. In an upstairs attic bedroom, his parents read a nursery rhyme to his 6-year-old sister. Suddenly a faint rumbling begins in the house, building to a roar. Then, just as suddenly, it stops. And so do all the clocks in the house. The boy dashes upstairs to the attic room—and finds only his sister there. His parents have completely vanished! Within minutes, two strangers appear at the door—with an explanation for what has happened. They are Sapphire and Steel, who, the show's producer says, are "agents of status quo responsible for ensuring that the natural order of things remain."

Sapphire and Steel, ATV's new twice-weekly fantasy series, operates in a twilight zone somewhere between science fiction and supernatural fantasy. Each episode begins with a sombre, descriptive introduction: "All irregularities will be handled by the forces controlling each dimension. Some erratic, heavy elements may not be used where there is life.

Medium atomic weights are available. Gold, Lead, Copper, Jet, Diamond, Uranium, Sapphire, Silver and Steel. Sapphire and Steel have been assigned."

However, there is no reference to who is saying it. Or where he is saying it, and to whom. One is left to presume that this disembodied voice is trying to do the viewers a favour and fill them in (on a somewhat vague level) on the other-worldly title characters.

The series was created and written by

A blend between the Bermuda Triangle and the Marie Celeste.

Peter J. Hammond, a 12-year veteran of tv writing who has clocked-in as story editor and series writer on such lukewarm dramas as *Z Cars* and *Hunters Walk*. In writing the *Sapphire and Steel* series, scribe Hammond has created for himself a very open-ended format—a sort of cocktail blend between the "mystery" surrounding the Bermuda Triangle and the Marie Celeste.

Producer-director Shaun O'Riordan views the show as "a story of other

forces, suggesting the breakdown in the exacting dimensions in our lives." In other words, the possibility of a slight tear in the canvas of Time, allowing for a two-way flow of traffic from present-to-past and past-to-present. The series' central characters are portrayed by the fetching Joanna Lumley (hot from her starring role in *The New Avengers*) and the apparently age-less David McCallum (not so hot from his fame in the 15-year-old *Man from U.N.C.L.E.* series and the recent tv flop, *The Invisible Man*).

The first story in the current 14-part series (another season of shows is already planned for Spring, 1980) takes place in a 250-year-old house, into which Time has "broken." Lumley and McCallum appear at the house to put things in their respective order. That is, retrieving the lost parents and destroying the force (and the source) responsible for the Time "break." To accomplish the task, in the latter stages, another "time agent" is brought into play—lead, a large, muscular character who seems to serve no other



Opposite: *Sapphire* (Joanna Lumley) and *Steel* (David McCallum) pose for a publicity picture.

Far left: A scene from David McCallum's previous tv fantasy outing, *The Invisible Man*. Left: Joanna Lumley as Purdie of *The New Avengers*.



purpose than shouldering down doors and crushing foundation stones into powder with his bare hands.

Lumley's *Sapphire* appears to be the more versatile of the two featured characters, having the ability to communicate via telepathy and physically experience sensitive changes in atmosphere. It also becomes noticeable that, whenever anyone's addressing her, she seems to delight in staring into their eyes for embarrassingly lengthy periods. One wonders what she's *really* thinking.

The start of the second story had the duo begin investigations at an old, abandoned railway station where an amateur ghost-hunter (though he calls himself an "investigator of psychic phenomena") is trying to parley with the malcontent spirit of a World War One infantryman.

For reasons yet unexplained, the soldier (or maybe the station itself) is bringing into the present other restless souls from previous military conflicts. By the close of the second installment we get to see, along with the soldier, a World War Two airman and a

couple of other "dead" characters.

Like all forms of mystery drama, a cobweb of questions is raised. What do they all want? What does the environment of the station represent to the "dead" folk?

The ghost-hunter has no idea. McCallum isn't saying. And Joanna Lumley is experiencing every available spooky effect, including transformation into a pretty young thing, circa 1914.

The special effects consist mainly of

Sadly, there is not attempt to explain the background.

transparent "ghost" figures, who fade in and out of the scenery. Scenes with the infantryman whistling a period tune as he wanders along the station hallways, and then slowly fades away with only his off-key whistle remaining are effective and strikingly eerie.

Sadly, there is no attempt to explain or explore the background and individual motivation behind the title characters. They are simply served up as cool and

exacting aliens with hyper-sensitive powers. Regarding the evil forces that they deal with, the two characters frequently question each other about the form of their enemy ("Is it human?"), but these references still give no clue to their own nature.

Overall, the video-taped production is well handled, despite some strange roving camerawork which is likely to disorientate the viewer from a tense, atmospheric scene. Also, at times, the dialogue (which helps promote a lot of the spooky sequences) is so laconic and almost meaningless that the viewer must eventually feel as if he's caught in a crossed-line telephone conversation.

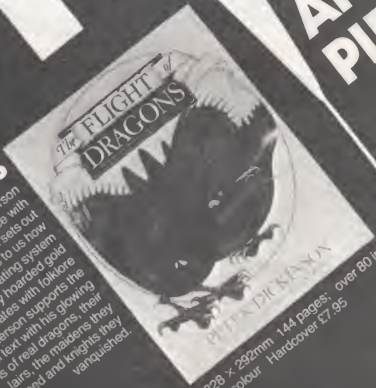
The design and production departments, handled by Stanley Mills and David Reid, respectively, are suitable for this type of programme. Cyril Ornadel's low, brassy music enhances the dramatic effect, carefully accenting the suspense and highlighting the claustrophobically eerie scenes. Unfortunately, the series has the shakiest opening titles seen on network tv in a long time

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THINGS TO COME

Starburst looks at what is new in the worlds of cinema and television science fiction. Compiled by Tony Crawley.

BARTEL'S PUNCTURE

Poor Paul Bertel. Since he first announced his ultimate in Frankenstein satires—*Frankencar*, in which the classic operation turns a man into a car—nothing has gone right for him. He told me about the film back in 1977 at the Cannes festival. He's been back there every year since, just shaking his head when I asked about *Frankencar*. Let's this summer, the director finally got himself a 2.6 million dollar deal with United Artist. Then the Hollywood unions won a new pay-hike and the budget would require a 17% increase, to 3 million dollars in all. No way, said UA. End of the project. Unless Paul's Bertel Films can come up with a quick cash injection.

EASY MONEY

One Hollywood venture with no budget problems is *Sum VI*, based on T.W. Hard's recent best-seller. The reason is two-fold: (a) It's science fiction and (b) it's being made by 20th Century-Fox. And they've learned to love sf and stop worrying about the price after *Star Wars* and *Alien*.



Harrison Ford turns cowboy for real in *The Frisco Kid*, a comedy from Robert Aldrich, with Gene Wilder as a rabbi. The western is Ford's fifth movie made in between *Star Wars* and *The Empire Strikes Back*. Proving that once a space buccaneer, *not* always a space buccaneer.

BIONIC BLITZ

Busy. Lee Majors looks less than Bionic when taking on the piranhas in *Killerfish*, while Margeaux Hemingway looks like Farrah. He "recovered" in good time to build a skyscraper or two in *Steel*.



While the Bionic bliss is over, with the end of his marriage to super non-star Farrah, Lee Majors continues his steady employment around the world, picking up quite a few tasty co-stars on his travels. As a construction worker in Stool, he has Jennifer O'Neill for company . . . Valerie Perrine shares his troubles in Canada's Agency . . . and he nets the jackpot of Karen Black, Marjorie Hemmingway and Marisa Berenson in the Italy-Brazil co-production, *Killerfish*, which mixes a bank caper with piranhas.

CALENDAR

Producer Irwin Yablens has not got the right to the entire calendar, then. After Halloween, he's planning Valentine's Day. With the possibility of Mother's Day next. Producer George Edwards and director Curtis Harrington—the Ruby team—have beaten Yablens to Friday The 13th, though. They start shooting this haunted girls' school chiller in December in Sacramento. Unless, of course, Irwin, the new king of the quirkies, beats *them* to it. Watch this space.

SUPERPOP

Yet another Superhassle over money means that Supergop Marlon Brando will be absent from the Superman sequel. Shooting has finally resumed with Christopher Reeve and Margot Kidder on what the Selkinds still call Superman.

2 (1%, more likely), but Brendo has been written out of the script. This means whatever footage Richard Donner originally shot of him for the second film will be junked, and Susannah York's role as Superman's mum will be beefed up to cover the loss of Jo-E.

The route is about the actor's cut of the sequel's profits. Brando wants a piece of the action, as he had on the first film; the producers, apparently don't wish to go the percentage deal route again. Brando's side of the original's huge profits netted him considerably more than his famous 3-million dollar salary. Indeed, playwright Tennessee Williams recently suggested that as Brando is so overweight these days (particularly in Coppola's *Apocalypse Now*), he's obviously being paid pound for pound Not, say the Selkinds, anymore. Anyway, Marlon is busy setting up his own plans for a return to movie-directing.

DRACULA

Having been plagiarised all around the world Romania is attempting to put the record straight about their No 1 export—with Doru Nastase's *Vlad Tapes* film. Or if you prefer: The True Life of Dracula. Vlad Tapes is better; it means Vlad The Impaler, his real nickname. Dracula in Romanian, by the way, means Son of the Devil. Stefan Sileanu has the title role, defending his homeland of Wallachia in 1457 against the Turks. The 100-minute film depicts Drac as a fine soldier and leader, courageous... and extremely cruel.

HAMILTONIA

After his knock-out Dracula spoof, *Love At First Bite*, George Hamilton is aiming to make a stab at Zorro, *The Gay Blade*. No truth, however, in the rumour that he's also considering a send-up of Flash Gordon's parents—*The Gay Gordons*.

IN SHORT

Muhammad Ali has keyed *The Aliens* are Coming. The film was due on NBC-TV in the States on October 30, until pushed aside for Part Two of Ali's dramatic debut, *Freedom Road*. . . Jessica Harper, the cult cutie from *Phantom of the Paradise* and *Suspense*, goes back to Woody Allen for his next, untitled, film. Jessica worked with Woody in *Love and Death*, which has been her bag ever since. . . Bionic Lindsay Wagner has a new six-hour miniseries with *Scrupes*, opposite Nick Mancuso from *Night Wing* and *Death Ship* and French beauty Marie-France Pisier. . . The Monty Python troupe running into a lot of heavy religious water with their satire, *Life of Brian*—blephemous say the churches; all the churches. . . Resting from Hobbitts, Ralph Bakshi has started his "innovative new film", *American Pop*. . . Lee Remick joins Burgess Meredith in *The Last Chase*, set in the years 1987-2015 when petrol and cars are no more and neither are most people over 13. Sounds like a Logan's *Re-Run*. . . After working with James Bond, Bettelstar Galectica and Richard Matheson (for *Somewhere in Time* with Christopher Reeve), Britain's Jane Seymour co-stars with Benji in *Oh Heavenly Dog*. . .

POLL COMEBACK

Inactive since trying to fashion a movie star queen out of Ferrah Fawcett Majors in *Somebody Killed Her Husband*, producer Martin Poll has announced several new cinema ventures. From the sublime (Stephen King

stories) to the ridiculous (spaced-out comedy). First the good news, Stephen King, author of *Carrie* and *The Shining*, will produce *Night Shift*, featuring four of his horror stories. King has scripted the terror tales with Lee Reynolds. And the bad news? Well, we don't know if it is—it just sounds like it. Poll has a science fiction comedy *Two Guys in Space* in the works, which sounds too close to those innumerable Italian rip-offs, such as Fred Williamson's *Two in the Stars*. . . This comedy stems from Chris Geist and Tom Leopold and will mark the directing debut of Bob Reiner, son of humour script writer, Carl Reiner, and star of the US TV version of *Till Death Do Us Part* (Bob played the Anthony Booth scouse son-in-law role).



Actor Max Von Sydow.

FLASH

Casting is complete on the major roles of *Flash Gordon*, now underway at Shepperton Studios. Unknown American actor Sam J. Jones plays our hero, with Max Von Sydow (The Exorcist himself) as Ming the Merciless. Latest additions include another American unknown, Melody Anderson, as Dale Ardan, Topol as Zarkov and Italian beauty Ornella Muti as Princess Aura. Three more British actors, well-known from their appearances on our TV screens, have also been signed up: Timothy Dalton, Brian Blessed and Patar Wyngarde. Mike Hodges directs from Lorenzo Semple Jr's script and, of course, Dino de Laurentiis is paying for the venture.

CARPENTER'S FIND

John Carpenter's great lady, Jamie Lee Curtis, has joined the Hollywood exodus to Canada for the suspense, *Prom Night*. This is her third chiller in a row after Carpenter's *Halloween* and *The Fog*. Paul Lynch directs from William (The Changeling) Gray's screenplay. And Jamie should add some class to a tired-sounding cast of Leslie Nielsen, Eddie Benton and Antoinette Bower.



SUPERDIRECTOR

As expected, Richard Lester has been revealed as the director of the *Superman* sequel. The movie, however, will still carry the major credit line: A Richard Donner Film. It's suggested at Pinewood studios that Donner shot as much as 65% of the sequel project while making the first film. That, we believe to be a distinctly generous percentage; we understand the true figure to be about 40% at the most. Now that the Brando role has been exed, and Susanne York's role increased, Lester will have at least 50% of the sequel to actually direct. . . In other words, we're back to our original disclosure in *Starburst 8* that the new film may turn out to be more of a *Superman 1 1/2*. 1% at best.

SCREEN GEMS

As the ever-increasing costs of film-making reaches what *Variety* terms "the megabuck are", *Star Trek* looms large as the second most expensive film ever made. The current budget figure is said to be around the 42-million dollar mark. Just 2-million dollars short of the most out-of-control movie of all time, *Cleopatra* in 1963.

By the time *Star Trek* is fully completed, however, plus the additional costs of promotion hype and advertising, it could topple *Cleo* from the top of the kind of film chart no producer really wants to be a part of. *Cleopatra* was made in Italy, of course, which makes *Star Trek* the most expensive movie ever made completely in America.

Just behind it, though, is *Heaven's Gate* the new film from *The Deer Hunter* director, Michael Cimino, in all kinds of trouble around the 40-million dollar figure. And just 5-million bucks behind that (and it's only just begun), is Dino de Laurentiis' production of *Flash Gordon*.

Steven Spielberg's new one, *1941*, has so far also cost around 40-million dollars (that's 20-

million bucks more than *Close Encounters* and it's not even a space movie, which tend to come expensive) that being why *Moonraker* cost 32 million dollars.

These kind of budgets—mega-bucks indeed—are impossible to understand, without a full knowledge of the workings of the movie business, not to mention the falling dollar this year. All the more so when one looks back just a few years and finds that *Ben-Hur* cost a mere 15-million dollars. Even *Star Wars* only cost 9 million dollars. The sequel, however, has a budget of 25-million dollars. Still, George Lucas and 20th Century-Fox can well afford that, and so every other movie has to try to match them. The name of the game is: If you want to make money, you've got to spend money. A mega-hit costs mega-bucks. But these kind of absurd financial gambles are going to crush a producer or two soon, if not bury an entire studio or two... And very soon.

SUPERSTAR HORROR

The superstars' current love affair for high budget re-cycling of the old B-movie horror and sf genre continues with Albert Finney going to New York for *Wolfen*. The venture is described as an urban horror story, and will be directed next autumn (1980), by Michael Wadleigh, still remembered for his classical *Woodstock* concert movie. David Eyre and Mike had written the script from Whitley Streiber's novel. Finney, who experimented with grisly horror once before in *Night Must Fall* (1963), will probably make his actual American screen debut in *Destinies*, (for the Prophecy film-maker, John Frankenheimer) before tackling *Wolfen*.

CANADIAN SF

Canada has another bash at science fiction—hopefully better than *The Shape of Things to Come*—with *Scanners*, which starts shooting any day now. Should be an improvement on the county's previous attempts as David Cronenberg is directing from his own original script, and with his biggest budget thus far: 4.1 million dollars. The film is set in a world ("a world of nightmare," says Cronenberg) where ESP is used as a weapon.



Latest Italian sf project in the works looks great, as per usual, in its publicity. If only the Rome producers got their poster artists to direct the film—or at least design the sets. Not to worry. Chances are we'll never see Stoneman—which is what L'uomo pietra means by the way, and not as in the French "Man of Rubbish"... oh, I don't know though...

DISNEY TO LUCAS

The other Harrison has joined up with George Lucas again. Harrison Ellenshaw, that is. He'll be supplying the matte magic for Harrison Ford and friends in *The Empire Strikes Back*, as soon as he's completed work on Disney's *The Black Hole*. Ellenshaw, head of the Disney studio matte department since 1975, supplied some of the mattes for *Star Wars*. Chicken feed compared to his current work. There were 20 matte

scenes in *Star Wars*, there will be 60 in *Empire Strikes Back*.

And *The Black Hole*? A mere 154!

DE PALMA RETURNS

After a long lay-off—and marriage to Nancy Allen—Brien De Palma is back at work with *Dressed to Kill*. It's from his own original scenario and features some unusual casting. Would you believe Angie Dickinson as a sub-



When I recently talked to Quatermass creator Nigel Kneale (an interview will appear in a future *Starburst*) he told me: "I was asked to write for Doctor Who at the very outset, when (the BBC's *Head of Drama*) Sydney Newman had first got the inspiration from heaven. It seemed to be such a rotten idea that I said I wouldn't do it. It was meant to be an adventure series with a central character who was able to dodge about in time and space. Which seemed to be a typical crummy producer's idea. It wasn't the sort of thing that would ever be a writer's idea. It was the sort of idea one had, sitting in the bath, and you say *Oh, no!* and you turn the tap off. *How ghastly!* And you forget it as quickly as possible and you try to think of something good. Unfortunately, that was where Newman's thinking stopped".

It's not difficult to understand why Nigel Kneale had misgivings. Dr Who is

Dr Who was to have pretensions towards seriousness.

virtually an sf version of *Crossroads*; a format that allows an endless number of characters to wander in and out of the programme with an endless number of problems. Even worse, Dr Who was to have pretensions towards "seriousness" with the Doctor meeting historical characters such as Robespierre and Marco Polo. What saved the series was a combination of four things.

The programme was transmitted in the "family viewing" spot on early Saturday evening (discussed by Tom Baker in *Starburst* 10). Experienced writers like Terry Nation were commissioned to write the show, which was produced by the BBC Drama Department, not the Children's Department. The enormous success of the Daleks (discussed by Terry Nation in *Starburst* 6) undoubtedly changed the direction and emphasis of the series. And William Hartnell made the part his own.

The first Doctor is usually remembered as being a benign old

One of the longest running sf tv shows, BBC's Doctor Who, is also one of the most fluid. The series format, and even the hero, are constantly undergoing revision. *Starburst* presents a brief history by John Fleming, chronicling . . .

THE CHANGING FACE OF DOCTOR WHO

grandfather figure—a role copied but misinterpreted by Peter Cushing in the two *Dr Who* feature films. Hartnell's version of the Doctor included a hard streak, although he no doubt had a heart (or, rather, two hearts) of gold, the character was very, very stern. The audience was conditioned to accept this characterisation from Hartnell because of his previous typecasting as military sergeant-major types; notably in his long-long-running ITV series *The Army Game*. In the very early *Dr Who* stories, there was even the hint that the Doctor was not the hero.

The heroes were really his companions—playing amiable, uninformed Watsons to his cold, aloof Holmes. The grown-ups could identify with humans Barbara and Ian; younger viewers could identify with the strange child Susan; but the central character was a distant, enigmatic old man who might even occasionally stoop to murder.

In the very first story *An Unearthly Child* (1963), the Doctor and his companions have to deal with an injured caveman who has been following them. When the Doctor is left alone with the man, he lifts a large rock and is obviously thinking of killing the inconvenient stranger with it. At the last minute, Ian arrives and interrupts his reverie.

As the programme developed, the Doctor did become more benign and dry humour did creep into the character. But still, as long as producer Verity Lambert and script editor David Whitaker controlled the show, the Doctor was a

The Doctor is arrested for breaking into a police box.

rather crochety old man and the character had a distinctly hard edge.

The humour was epitomised in a one-off Christmas show in the middle of *The Dalek Master Plan* (1965). In a whimsical episode, barely connected to the main storyline, the Doctor is arrested by a member of the Liverpool constabulary for trying to break into a police box (the TARDIS). The humour, of course, greatly increased when William Hartnell was replaced by Patrick Troughton.

When Hartnell decided to leave, there were serious thoughts of cancelling the series altogether. After, all, it would be like replacing Jack Warner as Dixon of Dock Green. Would the audience stand for it? Even Patrick Troughton was initially dubious, feeling that maybe the *Dr Who* series "had been done to death" and wouldn't last.

Producer Innes Lloyd guided the successful changeover from Hartnell to Troughton and took the brave step of totally changing the Doctor's personality as well as his face. There were long discussions about what the new Doctor should be like and, at one point, Troughton even suggested blacking the



Opposite: *Dr Who* (William Hartnell) and two strange creatures called Sensorites. Above: *The three faces of Dr Who* (left to right, Patrick Troughton, Jon Pertwee and William Hartnell). Below: *Dr Who* (Jon Pertwee) and the Ogrons. Below right: *Dr Who* (Tom Baker) and his assistant, also of the race of Time Lords, Romana



character up like Al Jolson or playing him as a windjammer captain with wild hair. But Sydney Newman had Charlie Chaplin in mind.

Troughton's characterisation, as it emerged, was influenced by that idea. It was much more whimsical, much more lighthearted than the rather grave and schoolmaster-ish Hartnell version. Troughton's gimmick was playing his recorder, something he did whenever he wanted to think—rather like Holmes with his violin. It was the second Doctor, too, who pioneered the celebrated sonic screwdriver, a wonderful and totally unexplained device which seemed able to do anything—a sort of pocket-sized K-9.

The early *Dr Who* stories retained the originally-intended balance between

history and science-fiction. There were stories where the Doctor met Marco Polo, Robespierre, the Crusaders, the Romans and the Aztecs. But, equally, there were outlandish fantasies set on other worlds in which the Doctor was pitted against bizarre monsters. In his time as producer, Innes Lloyd deliberately steered the series

"I want Dr Who to have less history and more guts."

firmly towards science fantasy. He said: "I want Dr Who to have less history and more obvious guts". He introduced adversaries such as the Cybermen. But basically, during Lloyd's time, the stories were centred less on monsters than on some mysterious hidden menace which

might—incidentally—involve monsters. For instance, the Chameleons story *The Faceless Ones* (1967) set at Gatwick Airport, in which aliens were gradually replacing human beings with alien replicas—basically a paranoid *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* idea.

When Peter Bryant took over as producer, the monsters arrived with a vengeance. There were Daleks, the Cybermen, the Yeti, the Ice Warriors and various assorted robots.

Meanwhile, Patrick Troughton's characterisation of the Doctor had developed into a kind of cosmic Columbo. He was a rather dishevelled, rather vague, tramp-like figure who seemed to be continually encountering

Hartnell's Doctor could be abrasive and rude.

military commanders facing alien invasions. They, of course, were in command and were clearly intellectually superior to this rather oddly-dressed intruder who stood in corners and asked odd questions. But, in fact, the Doctor knew exactly what was happening from the start and took a delight in slowly lifting the scales from unbelievers' eyes. However, where the Hartnell character could be abrasive and deliberately rude, delivering lines like "Your arrogance is almost as great as your ignorance," the playful Troughton character went in for amiable send-ups and subtle deflation.

This tendency to deflate authority was inherited by the third Doctor, Jon Pertwee, who was mostly Earth-bound with UNIT. Deflating officers and politicians by showing them to be inept bunglers, he was harsher than Troughton but less abrupt than Hartnell. Pertwee's dignity contrasted with Troughton's



Above: *The Doctor* (Tom Baker) at the controls of the TARDIS. Right: *The Doctor* (Jon Pertwee) and the alien warrior, Linx clash in *The Time Warrior*.

Left: *Dr Who* (Tom Baker) and his assistant, Sarah (Elizabeth Sladen). Below: *The Doctor* (Jon Pertwee) battles one of the fearsome Sea Devils.



apparent anarchy and the other thing he brought to the part was gadgetry. The new Doctor was much more gadget-orientated than the old (a touch of the actor entering the character) and, in one episode of Pertwee's final story *Planet of the Spiders* (1974), the production team let him run riot with every bit of hardware they could get their hands on—an autogyro, helicopter,

Jon Pertwee helped to design the Whomobile.

speedboat, hovercraft etc. Towards the end of Pertwee's tenure, he also helped design the Whomobile, which first appeared in the story *Invasion of the Dinosaurs* (1973). It was a flying saucer-type car for the Doctor to play with and, possibly, a sign that stranding the character on a realistic Earth was causing some concept-problems for the more fantasy-minded scriptwriters.

When Jon Pertwee decided to leave the series, various actors were considered (including Jim Dale), but the part finally



went to Tom Baker (see Starburst 10).

After the imperious Hartnell, the playful Troughton and the commanding Pertwee came the fantastic Baker with those large alien eyes and a return to the humorous characterisation of the second Doctor. A global disaster like the end of the world won't ruffle him at all. But, if he runs out of jelly babies, there's a panic.

One of the strengths of the Dr Who series is its flexibility. The central idea seems to have taken such a strong hold on the audience that even the details of the format can be changed without losing viewer-loyalty.

The original Doctor's companions were two adults and a youngster. The Doctor's grand-daughter Susan was originally intended to be a tough little Avengers-type girl who was able to communicate telepathically with the Doctor. But this idea was dropped before production began. Susan became an ordinary teenage girl with whom other teenage girls could identify. The original three companions soon developed into two: one female and one male. Latterly, that has developed into a single girl companion.

The arrival of K-9 is also rather worrying. Although he is extraordinarily popular with the viewers (at one time, he was getting as much fan mail as Tom Baker), he could turn into a crutch for the scriptwriters. Why bother to write the Doctor into an apparent corner and have him extricate himself imaginatively when you can just have K-9 rescue him? If the Doctor's in a cliff-hanging situation, it doesn't seem so serious because the audience knows the omnipotent and omnipresent K-9 is around. There is also the problem that K-9's tremendous powers weaken the threat posed by any

of Dr Who's adversaries—to such an extent that, in the new season, it apparently proved impossible to work with K-9 and the Daleks in the same story and K-9 had to be (unconvincingly) written-out for the duration.

Even the Daleks are not universally liked. At least two of the actors playing the Doctor hated working with them because they felt the deadly pepperpots had boring characters. All a Dalek wants to do is kill you and take over the world. In fact it's not quite that simple. The Daleks do have motivation. They're malformed creatures forced to live their lives inside a cramped metal casing, never able to walk in the sunlight, forever seeing through their restricted eyepiece a world in which human beings are physically unrestricted. No wonder they hate people, want to kill them, want to enslave them. The Doctor explained as much, once.

Nevertheless, humanoid villains certainly offer a more obvious and

The Meddling Monk was a mirror image of the Doctor.

immediate psychological interest. The Master, for example, as, in fact, got a higher degree in Cosmic Sciences. And there was the wonderful Meddling Monk, a sort of mirror-image of Troughton's Doctor. In fact, he wasn't so much villainous as mischief-making. One of his little plays was to deposit a small sum of money in a bank, then nip forward a few hundred years in time to collect a fortune in compound interest. He also had the brilliant thought of giving Tudor England television so that everyone could watch Hamlet: a worthy idea of which the Doctor disapproved.

Again, the Meddling Monk was the

Doctor's intellectual equal: a pre-requisite for humanoid villains. He was even one-up on the Doctor by having a fully-working TARDIS.

In the second episode of the Dr Who series, William Hartnell came out of his TARDIS, looked back at the police box and muttered, "Why didn't it change? Good heavens!" The original idea was that the TARDIS would blend into its surroundings, materialising in the 1960s as a police box, ancient Greece as a Doric column, a forest glade as an oak tree etc. But the police box seemed such a successful idea that it was retained and it was simply said that the TARDIS had a materialisation fault. The Doctor also had

No one can know for certain where the series is heading and what will happen.

no control over where he went in space and time (a necessary plot device). The TARDIS time circuits were later repaired by a short-sighted scriptwriter and now a piece of circuitous logic has had to be used to justify the original idea of uncontrollability: The Black Guardian of Time is chasing the Doctor—if the Doctor knows where the TARDIS is going, then there's a chance the Guardian might—so a randomiser device has been constructed and no-one can know where the machine will land next.

With actors, producers and script editors changing fairly regularly, a randomiser device has also been built into the series and no-one can know for certain where it is heading where it will land and what will happen. Especially as, on past experience, it seems likely that star Tom Baker and producer Graham Williams may soon think it's time to be moving on to other areas.



MISSION SPATIALE

A vintage movie poster for the 1953 film 'The Day After Tomorrow'. The central image depicts a towering, metallic robot with a helmet and a single antenna, holding a blonde woman in a red dress horizontally across its chest. The woman has a look of surprise or fear. The background is a dramatic sky with orange and yellow clouds, and a city, including the U.S. Capitol dome, is visible at the bottom, appearing to be under attack or in flames. In the foreground, a crowd of people, some in military uniforms, looks up in alarm. The title 'MISSION SPATIALE' is written in large, yellow, stylized letters at the top. At the bottom, the title 'LE JOUR OÙ LA TERRE S'ARRÊTA' is in large, white, block letters, followed by the cast and director information.

LE JOUR OÙ LA TERRE S'ARRÊTA

AVEC MICHAEL RENNIE · PATRICIA NEAL ET HUGH MARLOWE

UN FILM DE ROBERT WISE

THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL

Director of the new *Star Trek* movie, Robert Wise was also responsible for one of the earliest of the "alien from space" movies, *The Day the Earth Stood Still*. Continuing our Starburst SF Classics series, Phil Edwards looks back at this milestone of science fiction cinema.

The robot, Gort (Lock Martin), Helen Benson (Patricia Neal) and the alien, Klaatu (Michael Rennie), descend the ramp of the flying saucer.



"I am leaving you soon and you will forgive me if I speak bluntly. The Universe grows smaller every day and the threat of aggression by any group, anywhere, can no longer be tolerated. Your choice is simple—join us and live in peace or pursue your present course and face obliteration. We should be waiting for your answer. The decision rests with you."

With these parting words, Robert Wise closed his 1951 production, *The Day the Earth Stood Still*. The words still have as potent a meaning in today's troubled world as when Klaatu uttered them so forcefully all those years ago.

In the October 1940 issue of *Astounding* magazine, author Harry Bates published his story *Farewell to the Master*, the basis for *The Day the Earth*

The robot is to be a guardian of Earth's peace.

Stood Still. It told of a benign visitor to Earth, who brings with him a giant robot, Gnut, to steer Earth away from its path of self-destruction. Other beings in other galaxies are concerned with the violent nature of man and decide to send Klaatu as an emissary of peace. Gnut is both the master and a kind of robot policeman, capable of incredible strength and power. He is to be the guardian of the Earth's peace. But both are greeted with violence and treachery.

In the winter of 1949, producer Julian Blaustein became aware of the growing popularity of science fiction magazines and began a search for a suitable story for a screen treatment. He limited himself to *Earth-bound* stories, aware of the costs of producing a film story set in outer space. He was attracted to the Bates story by one particular image—that of a visitor from another planet emerging with his arm raised in a sign of universal peace, only to be shot down by the military. He saw it as a clash and a misunderstanding between cultures and the desire in man to destroy that which he does not understand. At the time, he was developing a similar theme in his production *Broken Arrow*, one of the first films to treat the

Author Harry Bates was never consulted about the film.

American Indian in a sympathetic light, within the confines of an almost formula Western.

Blaustein approached the production chief of Twentieth Century-Fox, Darryl Zanuck, with the story. Zanuck was not impressed so much with Bates' story as he was with the same image that had attracted Blaustein. Impressed by this and Blaustein's previous successes and the current interest in UFOs, he gave the producer the go-ahead to begin negotiations with the publishers, Street and Smith. Blaustein paid a thousand dollars for the screen rights. Apparently,

Harry Bates, who had been Astounding's first editor, from January 1930 to March 1933, was never consulted about this transaction and received five hundred dollars as his share. He remained bitter about this for many years.

Film writer Edmund North was contracted to write the screen treatment and commenced work on July 7, 1950. Within a month North had produced a 35 page outline as well as written sketches of the major characters. Blaustein and North became concerned about the HUAC hearings which were then beginning, as well as the Korean War in which the United States had become involved. They both had reservations about the project, feeling that their timing may no longer have been right for a film about Universal peace and understanding. Despite their reservations, they went ahead and presented the treatment to Zanuck. Zanuck believed in the project as a good piece of solid entertainment and saw in it a ready-made vehicle to run in the Science Fiction rally which was sweeping Hollywood.

With a script completed, *Day the Earth Stood Still* went into production on April 9, 1951, with a budget of just under a million dollars. At this time, the

Robert Wise was chosen to direct the movie.

film's title was *Journey to the World*, but during production, it was changed to its present title, to emphasise the key scene in the film, where Klaatu demonstrates his powers by stopping time for half an hour, thereby causing the Earth to literally stand still.

Robert Wise was chosen to direct for several reasons. He had recently completed the Fox film *The House on Telegraph Hill*, which he had brought in under budget. He had also been one of the key personnel working on the Val Lewton horror unit at RKO in the forties, first as an editor and then as a director. His work on *The Day the Earth Stood Still* is quite remarkable, handling the religious allegory sensitively, although Wise has maintained that he was never aware of these elements in North's screenplay. His handling of the night scenes in Washington, although shot on the set in Hollywood, are particularly effective. They are reminiscent of his work for Lewton and are in the finest traditions of the *film noir* style of the forties. This is most apparent in the scenes where Klaatu is hunted through the rain soaked streets of Washington, culminating in the sequence where he is shot down.

Though most of the film was shot in Hollywood, Wise's second unit director, Bert Leeds, had filmed several location shots and establishing scenes in Washington. Optical effects were later added to these resulting in such scenes as the landing of Klaatu's saucer on the baseball



Left: Gort (Lock Martin) and Klaatu (Michael Rennie) step out of their spaceship. Right: Klaatu stands before the controls of his ship. Below: Gort deals with the sentries posted before his master's ship. Bottom: Helen Benson (Patricia Neal) covers from Gort.

field.

Casting presented some problems. Spencer Tracy was the first actor considered to portray Klaatu, the feeling being that the part required someone of stature and dignified presence. However, Tracy was still under contract to MGM and was unavailable. The second choice was Claude Rains, but he, too, was unavailable. Fox turned to their own stable of contract actors. Blaustein was impressed by English actor Michael

The original Gort was similar in appearance to The Hulk.

Rennie, who had made his American debut in the Fox film, *The Black Rose*, in 1950. His fine-boned features and refined, yet firm, accent made him an obvious choice for the messenger of peace. In retrospect it seems difficult to envisage Trace in the role, or even Rains, so perfect was Rennie for the part.

Patricia Neal, who had just signed a contract with Fox, was selected to play Helen Benson, the war widow who is the only person to fully understand Klaatu's mission and help him. Her self-centred fiancé is played by Hugh Marlowe, who

would later battle Ray Harryhausen's aliens in *Earth Versus the Flying Saucers* in 1956. Noted character actor, Sam Jaffe, was signed as Professor Jacob Barnhardt, who tries to arrange the meeting with the world's leaders and is the instigator of Klaatu's demonstration of power. Neal's son was played by Billy Gray. Further credibility and reality was added to the production by using known radio broadcasters of the time as themselves. These were Drew Pearson and Elmer Davis of the ABC Network, H.V. Kaltenborn of NBC and Gabriel Heatter of Mutual.

The other pivotal role in *The Day the Earth Stood Still* was that of Gort who, along with Robby the Robot, Maria from *Metropolis* and C3PO, has gone into movie mythology. In Bates' original story, Gort (or Gnut), was a gigantic robot with basically human physical characteristics, though covered with a green metallic skin. His description in the story is not too far away from that of *The Incredible Hulk*. For the film, however, the concept was re-designed by art directors Lyle Wheeler and Addison Hehr. Two suits were made of foam



rubber, with a head piece made of metal. One suit had lacing joins at the front and one had them at the back, achieving a seamless, fluid-metal look whether the suit was filmed from the front or the back. A search was begun to find an actor of suitable height to portray Gort. Robert Wise remembered that the doorman of Grauman's (now Mann's) Chinese Theatre on Hollywood Boulevard was a giant of a man, Lock Martin, standing seven feet six inches. Martin, who would later play one of the Martian mutants in the William Cameron Menzies production of *Invaders From Mars* (see *Starburst* 13) was persuaded to appear as Gort. Despite Martin's height, he was not a particularly strong man and the hot, claustrophobic confines of the robot suit made it impossible for him to bend down and pick up Rennie and Neal as the script required. He was aided in these sequences by wires manipulated by off-camera technicians. In the scenes where he is seen carrying them towards the saucer, lightweight dummies were substituted for the actors. The disintegrating ray which is fired from the visor in Gort's helmet was added later optically, by Wheeler and

Mehr.

To add scientific credibility to the production, Dr Samuel Herrick, an associate professor of astronomy at the University of California at Los Angeles, was added to the production team. Working with the designers and Wise, he helped design the interior of Klaatu's saucer, making it as other-worldly and alien as possible by *not* incorporating any recognisable terrestrial knobs and dials to the controls.

However, the real strength of the film rests with North's screenplay. *The Day the Earth Stood Still* is still as potent a warning as when it was first shown. Despite Wise's disclaimer that he was not aware of the religious aspects of the story, it is these very elements which give the film its power. Klaatu is a Christ-like figure descending from the skies with a message of universal peace and warning of obliteration by the forces which mankind was manipulating in the name of science. Further adding to this illusion was the name which Klaatu adopted on Earth—Mr

The film is not a special effects bonanza.

Carpenter. He has the ability to work "miracles"—stopping time to justify the film's title. Gort has the power to raise Klaatu from the dead after he has been shot by the military. This last aspect was heightened unknowingly by the censors of the time. It was routine for a production company to submit a script to the Breen Office for approval, thereby avoiding the possibility that the censors would demand re-shooting and story re-writing, after the film was "in the can". The Breen Office was outraged that Gort had the ability to raise Klaatu from the dead, saying that only God could do that. North rewrote it so that Klaatu lived only a short time after the resurrection then returned to the skies. Another religious element was the betrayal of Klaatu by Hugh Marlowe as a Judas-like figure, doing it for gain in the form of fame. Edmund North later admitted that he deliberately included these devices saying: "they were my little joke".

The film is not a special effects bonanza as was to be the case with so many of the films which followed in its wake. However, what special effects there were, were handled convincingly by Fred Serson's team which included matte artists Ray Kellogg and Emil Rosa, with added contributions by L.B. Abbott. Gort's disintegrating ray and its effect as tanks melted were achieved by means of a series of matte paintings. Three different sized models of Klaatu's ship were constructed: a two foot version for the arrival in Washington (matted into Bert Leeds' location footage), a seven foot model for long shots of the saucer at rest and a three quarter size ship measuring 100 feet long by 25 feet high for the

After Klaatu is shot down by the military, his body is recovered by Gort and placed in a resuscitation chamber.



close ups. This latter set was constructed on the Fox lot. The mechanical parts of the saucer—the door opening, the ramp extending out of it—were operated from behind the mock-up by grips and technicians.

The final touch was added to the film by the contracting of composer, Bernard Herrmann, to write the score. He had composed the score for *Citizen Kane*, for which Wise had been editor.

Herrmann has long been considered one of the most capable composers in the film industry. He wrote several scores for Alfred Hitchcock, perhaps the most admired being those for *Vertigo* and *Psycho*. His music also added strength to several Harryhausen films, including *Jason and the Argonauts* and *Mysterious Island*, among others. Brian De Palma used his fine work in *Blood Sisters* and even ran his rough cut of *Carrie* to Herrmann's music, though his death prevented him carrying out the final scoring to that film. He was probably the most influential composer in Hollywood's second generation, after Korngold and Steiner had blazed the trail for symphonic scoring of films for Warner Brothers in the Thirties. For the Wise film, he used a full orchestra with the addition of electronic violins and basses

as well as using a theremin, an early version of today's synthesisers, which was based on light sensitivity converted to sound waves.

The Day the Earth Stood Still opened in America in September 1951, with a massive advertising campaign which relied heavily on the image of Gort holding Patricia Neal in the classic "monster and the girl" pose, dealing out death and destruction. An added incentive for cinema owners to show the film to best advantage was a contest held by Fox for the best displays and advertising campaigns. The prize totalled a hefty fifteen thousand dollars in US savings bonds. Although these were the days before saturation merchandising, as was the case with *Star Wars* and *Superman*, a few oddments were available to exhibitors to sell at their cinemas. These included die-cut Gort standees, as well as cardboard Gort masks. Fox also made available copies of a fake newspaper called *World News*, with banner headlines "World Threatened With Destruction By Distant Planet". These were distributed in advance of the film's playdates.

The film did well at the box office, though the critics were somewhat less kind to it, particularly in Britain. *The Monthly Film Bulletin* said "The deter-

mination to take the subject seriously reduces the pace and vigour of the film as an adventure story, but it never rises to the level of its own pretensions." *Variety* however, was kinder, saying "... a suspenseful, moralistic entry in the science fiction sweepstakes."

In 1951, audiences could not foresee the number of science fiction films which would follow on the heels of *The Day the Earth Stood Still*. It is only in retrospect that we can put this period of activity into perspective and weed out the good from the bad, the genuine masterpieces from the rip-offs. Only a handful of films pass the test of time. *The Day the Earth Stood Still* is one of these.

Day the Earth Stood Still (1951)

Michael Rennie (as Klaatu), Patricia Neal (Helen Benson), Hugh Marlowe (Tom Stevens), Sam Jaffe (Prof Barnhardt), Billy Gray (Bobby Benson), Lock Martin (Gort).

Directed by Robert Wise, Screenplay by Edmund H. North from the story *Farewell to the Master* by Harry Bates, Photographed by Leo Tover, Music by Bernard Herrmann, Art direction by Lyle Wheeler and Addison Hehr, Special effects by Fred Sersen, Edited by William Reynolds, Produced by Julian Blaustein.

Time: 92 mins

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PROPHESY

After the success of *Alien*, it looks as though the monster movie is undergoing a renaissance. John Brosnan has been to see the latest horror offering from director John Frankenheimer and asks—is *Prophecy* a monster flop?



When I was discussing *Alien* last month (Starburst 14) I said that underneath all the expensive sets and special effects it was basically a 1950s "B" monster movie and the same applies to John Frankenheimer's *Prophecy*. But whereas *Alien* was content to be a good horror film and nothing more, *Prophecy* tries to be both a horror movie and a platform for propaganda at the same time. *Prophecy*, you see, has a Serious Message and worthwhile though that Message may be it proves to be the film's undoing. According to script writer David Seltzer, however, the message is the reason he did the film: "When John Frankenheimer said it was his ambition since he was a child to do the world's greatest monster movie I was in a phase of my life where I was telling everyone that I wouldn't touch any project that wasn't serious-minded and educational. But what I've done in *Prophecy* is take a pet subject that I was nurturing for a while and saw this monster framework as the perfect sugar coating to hide a kernel of nourishment."

Quite an arrogant statement, especially coming from the man who wrote *The Omen*, but one I'd be prepared to swallow if *Prophecy* matched the above description. Unfortunately it isn't a "kernel of nourishment" within a monster movie framework but two

separate films loosely connected together. The first part is the "serious-minded and educational" one that deals rather realistically with the subject of industrial pollution, then there is an abrupt change of dramatic gears and part two begins which becomes pure fantasy nightmare. The two sections clash and as a result the film as a whole doesn't work.

If Seltzer wanted to write a serious film about the dangers of ecology caused by callous Big Business he could have utilised the elements of a thriller to convey his message, as the makers of *The China Syndrome* did very effectively, and still produced an entertaining movie. But by having *Prophecy* change from one type of film into another halfway through, his message wasn't effective at all. Audiences aren't going to come out of *Prophecy* thinking about ecology, they're going to be thinking about the monster that was chasing the actors for the last third of the movie. It's as if the makers of *The China Syndrome* had decided the best way to convey the dangers of atomic reactors would be to have a radioactive amoeba grow to giant size and attack Jane Fonda. Now I'd love to see a movie where Jane Fonda is attacked by a giant amoeba but I'm glad I didn't see it in *The China Syndrome*.

Prophecy is set in the North American state of Maine and concerns a young

doctor called Rob (*Robert Foxworth*) who, accompanied by his wife Maggie (*Talia Shire*), has been sent to investigate the claims of an Indian tribe that the local mill is destroying their way of life. The mill's representative Isely (*Richard Dysart*), tries to persuade him that there is no pollution coming from the mill. He accuses the Indians of being unnecessarily aggressive, even blaming them for a number of unexplained deaths in the area. But after Rob makes contact with two of the Indians, John and Ramona (*Armand Assante* and *Victoria Racimo*) he learns that there have been several deformed babies born in the tribe recently, some so bad they had to be destroyed. There is other evidence that something is very wrong—Rob sees a salmon the size of a dolphin and then a tadpole bigger than a toad. One night when he opens the cabin door, after Maggie and he have heard something scratching outside, he is attacked by a crazed racoon. (This scene reminded me



of the night, a few years ago, when I was awoken at 1 am by something scratching on the door of my London flat. As I didn't own a pet of any description I knew there was no conceivable reason why anything should be scratching on my door and I naturally found the situation very disturbing. I would love to tell you what I found when I opened the door and what happened afterwards but the editor of this illustrious journal has only

Maggie (Mimi Stiller) and her husband Rob (Robert Foxworth) prepare to defend themselves as the beast prowls around outside the cabin. Opposite below: Moment of terror for Maggie. Left: John (Armand Assante) accompanying Maggie and Rob as they trek through the countryside towards the mill for the safety of their cabin.



given me two pages for this review).

Rob finally discovers that the mill operators are using a mercury solution to keep the logs clear of algae and other parasitical growths while they're in the water which means that mercury has been getting into the surrounding lake and river systems. Alarming, mercury is a powerful mutagen which can cause great damage to the chromosomes of unborn animals, resulting in deformities or worse.

And unknown to Rob his wife is pregnant (she hasn't been able to tell him because she knows he doesn't want children). Understandably she is horrified when she learns of the mercury pollution because the night before she and Rob had eaten a large dinner of fish caught in the lake.

When a family of campers is brutally murdered in the woods the Indians are blamed once again but Rob sets out to discover the truth. Accompanied by Maggie, John and Ramona, he flies out to the scene of the tragedy and it is there they discover the "things"—two mewling

monstrosities that are apparently the offspring of whatever is doing the killing. The creatures are quite repulsive, vaguely resembling human babies as they might appear after being beaten to a pulp, starved and left out in the sun for a few days. They make the baby in *It's Alive* look quite attractive by comparison. One of the creatures dies but Rob takes the survivor to a nearby Indian camp and calls for the mill representative, Isely, to come and see the evidence for himself. But shortly after Isely and his men arrive so does the parent of the creatures... which resembles a giant one-eyed bear that has been flayed alive and then roasted over any open fire.

The monster despatches several people in a gruesome manner and also destroys the only means of transport. Rob, Maggie and a few of the others survive by hiding in a tunnel under the camp and are then faced with a long trek through the woods knowing that the thing is lurking out there somewhere. The following

afternoon they locate an open truck used by the mill workers but night-fall finds them still a long way from safety. These sequences and the ones that follow have a true nightmare quality—the nerve-racking drive through the dark forest with the spotlight picking out eerie shapes among the trees, and the inevitable moment when one of the shapes turns out to be the beast itself; the panic-stricken swim across the mist-shrouded lake, with the monster in hot pursuit, and the final confrontation in the barricaded cabin with the thing trying to force its way in. As a pure horror film this section works very successfully. But the problem is that none of the problems established in the early "serious-minded, educational" section of the picture are resolved or even mentioned again. For instance, we never do find out what Rob and Maggie plan to do about Maggie's pregnancy, something which, up to then, had been Maggie's chief concern throughout the picture.

Comparing *Prophecy* to *Alien* as a plain horror film the most obvious question is: how do their respective monsters measure up in terms of scaring power? Well, the creature in *Alien* has the advantage of being a totally alien creation whereas the one in *Prophecy* rather resembles a giant grizzly bear, albeit one with a serious skin problem. Designed by Thomas R. Burman the monster is undoubtedly an impressive piece of engineering, particularly in close-up, but in some of the long-shots it just looks like a large bear. Also we see far too much of it towards the end of the film which tends to dissipate the effect (this is an error that the makers of *Alien* wisely avoided).

The other advantage *Alien* has is that it's the first movie of its type that has been made for a long time (the last monster-in-outer-space film was probably *The Green Slime* in 1968). It is also the first time that such a movie was done so lavishly, with the result that it comes across as something new and original. *Prophecy*, on the other hand, seems to follow in footsteps recently established by *Jaws*, an impression reinforced by Leonard Rosenman's *Jaws*-like music (it also bears a more than passing resemblance to *Grizzly*, William Girdler's cheap *Jaws* rip-off about a giant grizzly bear that goes on the rampage chewing up campers).

So one must say that *Alien* wins hands, or claws, down—a verdict that has been confirmed by cinema audiences in America where *Prophecy* didn't do nearly as well as *Alien* at the box office. Personally, however, I rather enjoyed it. In fact I enjoyed both parts of it—the ecological thriller in Part 1, and the horror film in Part 2. And these days it isn't often you get two movies for the price of one.

Maya Merchandising

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THE METAL WARRIORS

Part Two: Continuing our exclusive report on the new animated science fiction film from *Fantastic Planet's* Rene Laloux, Tony Crawley looks at the story of the film.

New readers start here . . . Last issue we exclusively broke the news of the new animated space fantasy film, directed by the maker of *Fantastic Planet*, Frenchman Rene Laloux. On that award-winning animation movie, he worked with the wondrous artist, Roland Topor. For his new movie—alas not due for release until March, 1981—he has the services of the brilliant French sf painter Philippe Caza. Bakshi, it ain't. We showed a mere taste of Caza's breathtaking work last month, with news of the filming in Canada and a hint of the story.

The tale begins on the idyllic planet of



Gandahar, where times moves both forwards and backwards, where the satisfaction of appetites for food and love rule, where the art of dreaming has replaced work. But where trouble is the same size, or given the Gandaharians' peaceful mode of life, thrice as dangerous . . .

First sign of menace on Gandahar is the steady disappearance of the planet's one-eyed birds, trained to keep an eye, as it were, on the frontiers. The birds are obviously being destroyed by something—someone? The planet is governed by women, and Myrre Ambisextra, chief of the Female Council, orders Syl Lanv' to

discover what fate is befalling their one-eyed flock.

"The young man goes forth," explains director Laloux, "and encounters innumerable and incredible difficulties, eventually being captured and made prisoner by the very foes he is seeking: the terrible metal warriors who are secretly preparing an invasion of Gandahar."

Our handsome hero manages to escape however, with another captive, the beautiful Airelle—"thanks," as Laloux puts it with a grin, "to the aid of a friendly monster".

And now Syl Lanv' makes use of his greatest weapon—the fluctuating, see-sawing Gandaharian time-scales. He can only save his planet by hibernating in an enormous egg shell at the bottom of the sea. This process enables Syl Lanv' to project himself forward into the time period when the destruction of his planet is actually afoot.

When he wakes in his egg, time is back to the present and the immense army of robot warriors are on the verge of breaking through the Gandahar defences. Risking all, Syl Lanv' faces the metal warriors' creator, The Metamorph, in battle.

The Metamorph has the appearance of a gigantic brain—originally invented



years ago by Gandahar's scientists during their extraordinary biological experiments. And it is through the scientists' negligence over the years, that this brain has continued to develop and turn into a monstrously intelligent enemy of its makers.

Needless to say, with the hindsight of his forward time trip, our hero saves the day—yesterday, today and tomorrow, that is—and succeeds in destroying the Metamorph.

The planet is safe. However Syl Lanv's ex-captive friend, Airelle, has disappeared. But where? She could, given the oddities of time on Gandahar,

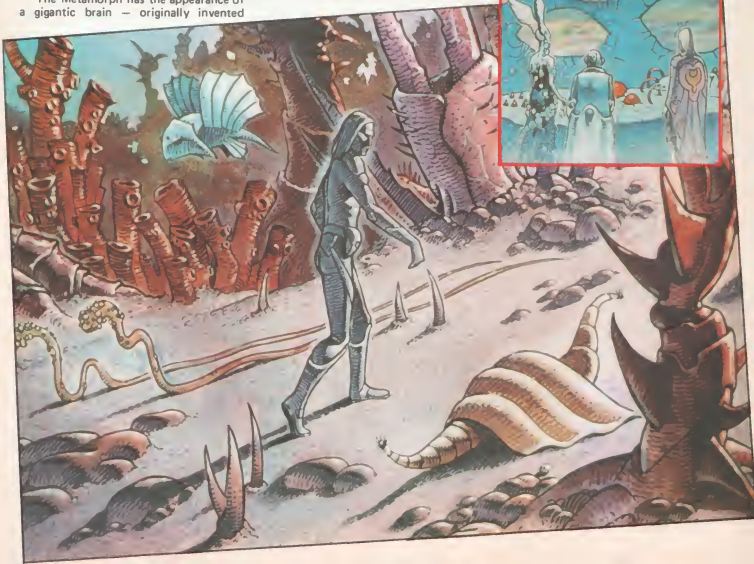
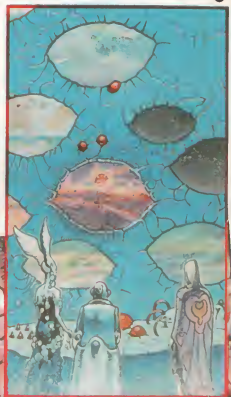
be perhaps a million-trillion miles away in space. Syl Lanv' sets out to find her, knowing in his heart that someday he will succeed. Somehow.

"It's on this note of hope that the time-space fantasy of Gandahar ends," says Rene Laloux.

Meaning you've a sequel up your sleeve?

"Well, let me say it is on this note of hope—and the promise of future adventures—that our film ends."

Which is euphemistic double talk for: Wait and see.

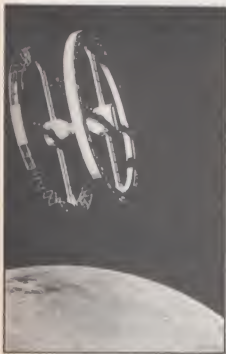


STARBURST LETTERS

Science fiction comes of age

Number 12 was an unusual issue of *Starburst* in the blend of features covered compared to past issues, and no doubt your younger readers will complain at the lack of bug-eyed monsters featured, despite the *Robots Portfolio*, but I believe that this was the best issue yet. It recognised prevailing adult acceptance of science fiction in the mainstream cinema that has only recently been evidenced. Neither *Moonraker* nor *The China Syndrome* can be described as science fiction films, but nevertheless they have been made with sf elements inherent in their makeup to appeal to a much broader section of the movie-going public.

This, I think, could be the beginning of an important coming-of-age for science fiction as a theme in mainstream cinema, which has always tended to look down on sf as being rather childish and frivolous in the past (and with good reason. No one can say that sf cinema has had a good track record, and apart from a few exceptional cases, such as *The Day the Earth*



Stood Still and 2001, its general trend has been to furnish a variation on the monster-on-the-loose or invasion theme).

Perhaps we are just beginning to see the real—and long-overdue—birth of science fiction in popular cinema. I hope so!

Paul Richmond, Darlington, Co Durham.

Artwork covers?

First of all, congratulations on reaching your second volume—I knew you could do it!

Secondly, "Science Fantasy in Television, Cinema and Graphics"—good thinking!

I'm pleased to see that you are using artwork as opposed to photographs for the main section of your front cover, but please bring back those centrespread film posters.

Also, what ever happened to *Things to Come*? Why on Earth did you change the lettering style?

Turning now to *Starburst* 13 (I hate that. Can't you see that if you started a fresh volume and headed it as such you would attract collectors who for some reason missed the first volume but would be eager to start collecting so long as they had a specific place to start from, ie Volume 27) I should like to congratulate Mr Brosnan on his enjoyable and honest review of *Moonraker*.

Finally, one other little matter. The jokes in Buck Rogers may have been a little adult for a U certificate, but as we all know, Buck was awarded an A.

Steve Blakemore, Southampton, Hants.

Magic Carpets!

Thank you very much for *Starburst* 12. This issue proved an excellent finishing touch to the first volume of Britain's best fantasy magazine. *The Derek Meddings* and *Richard Kiel Interviews* were interesting, but I especially enjoyed this month's *Things to Come* from the Cannes Film Festival.

If I may, I would like to comment on a fantasy film I saw recently, *Arabian Adventure*. I must admit, I walked into my local cinema with a certain amount of apprehension, expecting to see something akin to the recent version of *The Thief of Bagdad*, which, although enjoyable, was at times lacking in special effects (eg, the genie and the flying carpets). I can only say I was completely wrong, and found the best Arabian Nights movie I have ever seen. I think the film's main strength lies in its magic carpet effects which seem to have been created in much the same way as the flying effects in *Superman*, a combination of wires (although this is only a guess—I never saw any), models and front projection techniques. The front project-

ion shots are easily the best of this kind I have ever seen, putting even *Superman*



to shame, and do not suffer from the usual flaws of a blue haze around the actors in the shot or a blurring of the background being projected.

Finally I would like to enquire if you have any plans to print articles of the two Marvel telemovies not yet seen on British television, *Dr Strange* and *Captain America*. I cannot see any problem in doing so, especially as *Starburst* is a Marvel publication.

Good luck for the future!

Andrew Sumner, Formby, Merseyside.

Movie misquotes

I really must take Harvey Clarke (*Starburst Letters*, *Starburst* 12) to ask for his statements regarding the catchphrase "May the Force be with you". The most famous phrase ever uttered on film? What piffle! Perhaps to the *Star Wars* fan the phrase is the most famous in the history of film, sf or otherwise. But I'm sure a lot of film buffs would argue with him. How about "Here's lookin' at you, kid!" (Bogart, *Casablanca*, 1943) or "Will you come up sometime and see me?" (Mae West, *She Done Him Wrong*, 1933). I could go on like this all day. "Made it, ma. Top of the world!" "Frankly, my dear, I don't give a damn!" "Mother of Mercy. Is this the end of little Rico?"

Incidentally, Bogart never actually said "Play it again, Sam". Along with such other misquotes as "Come up and see me sometime" and "I want to be alone", it is the product of film publicists rather than script writers.

Steve Kelly, Bow, London.

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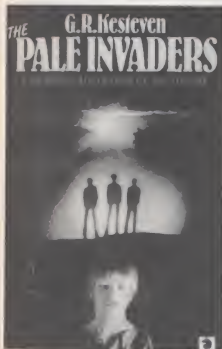
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GRANADA

BOOK WORLD

Reviews by Angela Montgomery



THE PALE INVADERS

by G.R. Kesteven

The cover line calls it "A gripping adventure of the future". Personally I found its grip rather like that of a Banded in the bath.

This is not to say that it's a totally boring book. It's just that the mysterious title and every cover lead you to expect a different sort of story from the one offered.

In other words *The Pale Invaders* has nothing whatsoever to do with anaemic Martians or other similarly afflicted aliens. It is in fact about the life of a small primitive community on earth after the "Upheaval"—presumably some sort of holocaust caused by Man.

The story is told by a boy called Gerald, and we learn from him about the simple life of the people in his valley. No-one can read or write except those specially chosen, and nobody has heard of machines apart from Old Carz—a foolish old man who rambles on about the old days where there used to be things called Carz and Townz. The "Pale Invaders" (who, incidentally, don't turn up until half way through the book) are people from outside the valley who know about machines and suchlike. These strangers are feared for they bring the threat of the past when man was destroyed by the machines he had made.

The author of the book took up writing to help children with reading difficulties. This is obvious in *The Pale Invaders* as most of the story is concerned with Gerald learning "the reading and the writing" and the secret knowledge that this gives him. In this way the book has a clear educational value which is a good thing in itself.

The basic plot of *The Pale Invaders* is interesting enough, but somehow it lacks that certain tinge of excitement. The pacing of the book

seems to be most at fault here. Nevertheless Kesteven gets his message across, in the importance of learning to read and write, so it should prove useful for those children who need a bit of convincing.

Published by Knight Books. 155 pages. 70p.

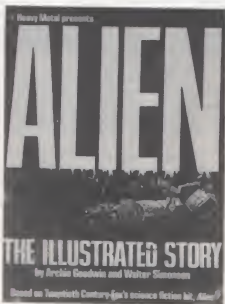
ALIEN: THE ILLUSTRATED STORY

by Archie Goodwin and Walt Simonson

If standing in a four mile queue to see *Alien* isn't your idea of the ideal pastime, you might like to try this book instead. It also spares you the embarrassment of screaming in front of a cinema audience at the scary bits—with the book you can do it in the privacy of your own home.

In spite of these obvious advantages, *Alien: The Illustrated Story* does have its faults. The plot—what there is of it—unfolds quite clearly: the crew of the *Nostromo*—a huge mining ship—awake from hypersleep as they return to Earth. They discover that "Mother", the ship's computer, has interrupted the voyage because of a strong radio signal being beamed at them from an unnamed planet. On investigation, the SOS turns out to be a warning, but too late. Unknown to the crew, they return to their ship accompanied by an alien with an insatiable desire to eat people. The rest of the story concerns the battle between the crew and their unwanted visitor.

The trouble with the book is that the plot unfolds too clearly, revealing all its hokiness. In the film, the meagre story line provides a basis



for stunning visual effects and "Look behind you!" type suspense. Unfortunately this can't be translated into a comic book.

Speaking of visual effects, Walt Simonson's artwork is very impressive. He is particularly strong on action, especially the violent kind. However, if you're looking for echoes of Giger's muted shades, you won't find any. This book isn't out to create atmosphere. It intends to

dazzle, and it certainly does, usually by means of blood eruptions on a volcanic scale.

Simonson uses some interesting techniques to recreate certain moments from the film, eg slow close-ups and frame-by-frame breakdowns of relatively quick incidents. The effect is very cinematic. It should be added that some of the frames are so action packed that they are almost incomprehensible—unless you've seen the film. But then you wouldn't need to buy the book...

Published by Heavy Metal Communications. 68 pages. 3.95 dollars—import.



AN ATLAS OF FANTASY

BY J. B. Post

Despite the "World of Your Hundred Best Tunes" type cover, this is a rather excellent publication. The author has painstakingly put together 112 maps of some of the best-known fictional worlds. Well, after all, he is the map librarian at the Free Library of Philadelphia, but it's still a great idea and a very informative book.

The most striking aspect is probably the book's sheer volume. We're all familiar with Tolkien's maps, of course. But it's amazing that there are so many fantasy lands. The diversity of the contents is remarkable. The Land of Oz, Pooh's Turf and Toad Hall are in there with Pilgrim's Progress, Utopia and Treasure Island. The author is also a great fan. Hence the inclusion of such worlds as Frank Herbert's *Dune*, Mongo from Flash Gordon and *The Worlds of Captain Future*. For the more esoteric reader there are quaint medieval maps of Eden, the Atlantic Ocean and Scharaffenlande, the Utopia of German Literature. Each map is accompanied by an explanatory note.

The obvious purpose of such a book is to bring "cartographic fantasy" to the attention of the general public. But it does more than that. The reader becomes intrigued by the array of imaginary lands and will no doubt want to know more about them. The way to do that is to read the books involved. So *An Atlas of Fantasy* is also an introduction to a wide range of literature.

This is also a thorough and fascinating work. With such a modest cover price, it's an invaluable source of reference to anyone interested in fantasy.

Published by Souvenir Press. 210 pages. £3.25.

THE HITCHHIKER'S GUIDE TO THE GALAXY

Feature by Alan Murdoch



"The Hitch Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy is a truly remarkable book. The introduction starts like this: Space, it says, is big. Really Big. You just wouldn't believe how vastly, hugely, mind-bogglingly big it is. I mean, you may think it's a long way down the street to the chemist but that's just peanuts to Space..."

Thus states the script of Douglas Adams' absurdly unique and phenomenally successful radio play *The Hitch Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy*. The six-part series was produced for BBC Radio 4 by Geoffrey Perkins, each episode lasting thirty minutes. With the first episode transmitted on 8th March, 1978, the BBC received such enormous and immediate response from both critics and audience that the entire series was repeated beginning on 23rd April, 1978.

The fan mail and the enquiries didn't ease off. Even after the repeat. The BBC executives were not quite sure what to make of the huge response, so they repeated the entire six episodes again, starting on November 1st, 1978.

The Hitch Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy concerns the inter-stellar travels of Arthur Dent and his friend from a small planet in the region of Beetlejica, Ford Prefect. This strange pair are guided by The Book, which is interpreted in

the radio version by Peter Jones.

In the course of their travels they discover that Earth is, in fact, a computer designed by super-intelligent creatures disguised as mice, with the object of producing the question to the ultimate answer. Which, as we all know, is 42.

The fight to bring the series to the radio was a long one. Adams' peddled the pilot episode from BBC department to BBC department, finding both himself and his script being shunted from Comedy to Drama and finally to Light Entertainment. Finally, in desperation, he approached Robert Holmes, script editor of Dr Who, a post Adams himself now ironically holds. He lended commissions for four Dr Whos and six Hitch Hiker's Guides simultaneously.

Even so the BBC were a little bewildered at the prospect of actually airing Hitch Hiker's Guide and, perhaps due to embarrassment, tried to conceal the programme in the graveyard slot of 10.30pm on Wednesdays. To further ensure as few people as possible actually heard the show there was no advance publicity in the *Radio Times*.

BBC Publications were offered the book rights when the show premiered on Radio 4 and turned them down. But after the success of the series and the stage production at the ICA in

London BBC Publications apparently changed their minds and asked to see the scripts. Unfortunately, Adams had already signed a deal with Pen Books. BBC Publications were hurt. Why did nobody ask them if they were interested first?

The book is to be published in October this year. A record which condenses the the six-part series into 100 minutes is due for release by Original Records towards the end of September. And plans are afoot to revive the stage production at a larger venue. And Adams is working on a second series.

The last word must go to The Hitch Hiker's Guide itself: "The principle of generating small amounts of finite probability by simply hooking up the logic circuits of a Brambleweeny 57 sub-meson brain to an atomic vector platter suspended in a strong Brownian motion producer (say a good, hot cup of tea) was, of course, well understood and such generators were often used to break the ice at parties by making all the molecules in the hostess's undergarments leap one foot to the left."

"Many respectable physicists said they weren't going to stand for that kind of thing, partly because it was a debasement of science, but mostly because they weren't invited to those sort of parties!"



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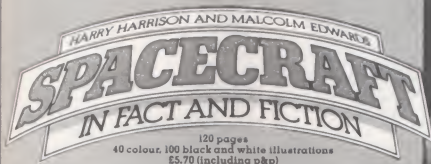
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FANTASTIC CLIFFHANGERS

In this, the second part of our look at the great science fiction serials of the thirties and forties, Tise Vahimagi covers the super-heroes from Captain Marvel to Commander Cody.



In the second Batman serial from Columbia, Batman and Robin (1949), Robert Lowery and John Duncan battle a criminal mastermind called the Wizard who has stolen a control device from an eccentric professor (now there's an original plot-line!)

The Forties were rife with propaganda. The world now had a real villain, a common enemy. While the feature films were busy fighting World War Two in both the Pacific and European theatres the serials weren't far behind. Although the villains of the cliffhangers were not *always* presented as either Nazis or Japanese, the implications were all too real.

When the war was finally over the new "enemy" became Outer Space. Following the UFO hysteria of the late forties, Hollywood rushed headlong into the Fifties with all manner of space fantasies—and again, the serials were quickly off from the starting-post. The development is noticeable during the latter part of the Forties.

The swarthy villain of numerous gangster movies, Eduardo Cianelli, portrayed the bad guy once again, in Republic's *The Mysterious Dr Satan*, directed by William Whitney and John English in 1940. Dr Satan is a mad scientist type who has created a robot with which he plans to

The robot crushes Dr Satan to death.

terrorise the country. Although his mechanical monster is operative Dr Satan needs a special remote control device to make the robot perfect. However his attempts to steal the device are foiled by a mysterious character called Copperhead (*Robert Wilcox*), because of the copper head mask he wears.

After 15 chapters of combat, threats, kidnappings and narrow escapes, Dr Satan is defeated—though in a somewhat gruesome manner: Copperhead has sneaked into Dr Satan's hideout in order to rescue a kidnapped scientist, Professor Scott (*C. Montague Shaw*). During the course of the escape they are interrupted by Dr Satan whom they knock unconscious. Hearing some of his henchmen approaching, Copperhead puts his mask on Dr Satan and makes himself scarce. The scientist tells the henchmen he's knocked out Copperhead and the villains immediately toss their boss into a room with the deadly robot, which is then activated. The robot grips Dr Satan, crushes him to death and then both crash through a



"Shazam". Meanwhile, the scientists who have entered the sacred tomb have discovered "The Scorpion", a powerful gold weapon, the potency of which is brought about by focusing five peculiar lenses. The scientists divide the lenses among themselves so that none of them will control the supernatural power.

But a sinister gang, headed by a mysterious individual who calls himself "The Scorpion", embarks upon a cam-

Captain Marvel is totally invincible.

paign to steal the five lenses from the scientists so that their combined power will be sufficient to conquer the Universe. The villains inflict various tribulations on the party, from which the members are inevitably rescued by Billy, in the guise of Captain Marvel. As Marvel, he is totally invincible. When the Scorpion's men attempt to kill him by means of a fiendishly contrived guillotine, the falling blade smashes to bits against his superhuman body. When a time bomb is placed in Billy's plane, he becomes

Captain Marvel and glides safely through the air to the ground.

The expedition returns to America, but it is pursued by the sinister Scorpion, who is obviously determined to leave no stone unturned in his ambition to attain world dominion. His malevolent influence is directed towards Betty (Louise Currie), secretary of the expedition, when he learns she is entrusted with many of the secrets of the party and undertakes various dangerous missions for them.

Eventually, the Scorpion acquires all the lenses but one, without which he is unable to focus the power of the great weapon. Naturally he becomes all the more determined to possess it, and will stop at nothing . . .

To find out what happens in the last chapter—who the Scorpion really is, where Captain Marvel keeps his costume when he's Billy Batson—you'll have to see the serial for yourself! However, when you do you'll be seeing one of the best superhero serials made during the heyday of the cliffhanger. William Noble's photo-

window to total destruction.

A seasoned performer like Cianelli manages to make something of his role as the villain, but the chases and last-minute escapes soon begin to wear thin.

The robot, however, is quite amusing. It is, incidentally, another exiled Volkite from *Undersea Kingdom* (1936). In one chapter, when Dr Satan wishes to demonstrate the robot's power and strength, he commands it to crush one of his own henchmen to death.

Arriving in 1941, *The Adventures of Captain Marvel* represents the zenith of Forties serial production. Delivered by the accomplished directorial team of Whitney and English, *The Adventures of Captain Marvel* offers some excellent photography, special effects and action sequences.

The next costumed character to be honoured with his own serial was the phenomenally successful radio and pulp detective, *The Shadow*. Disguised variously as Lamont Cranston and Lin Chang, *The Shadow* (Victor Jory) battles a criminal mastermind known only as the

Billy Batson is transformed into a superman—Captain Marvel.

Black Tiger. In an effort to make the villain of *The Shadow* even more mysterious, Columbia left the actor responsible for the role uncredited.

To a remote section of Siam (now Thailand), zealously guarded by unconquered native tribes, comes the unwelcome Malcolm Scientific Expedition seeking knowledge of the ancient Scorpion Dynasty.

Billy Batson (Frank Coghlan Jr.), assistant to the radio expert, is the only one of the party who does not enter a forbidden chamber; as a result he is rewarded the power to transform himself into a superman—Captain Marvel (Tom Tyler)—upon uttering the magic word

Above left: Tom Tyler in the title role of *The Adventures of Captain Marvel* (1941). Below: Warren Hull as the arch-nemesis of evil *The Spider* in *The Spider's Web* (1936).



In our mini poster gallery on the facing page we have such collector's items as

The Mysterious Island (1951, top left). *Tristram Coffin* starred as *The King of the Rocket Men* (1949, top right). *The Missile Monsters* was an edited feature version of *Flying Disc Man from Mars* (1951, centre).

Commando Cody, Sky Marshal of the Universe was originally produced for tv but finally emerged as a 12-chapter serial.



machines—they were simply invented to be stolen by some equally crazed villain.

The plot of Republic's *Captain America* (1944) is not unlike the basic plot of *The Adventures of Captain Marvel*. Both involve a character with a dual identity (in this case the villain is called "The Scarab") and both are busy

Captain America looked different from the comic version.

decimating former members of an expedition. The protagonist, Captain America, has his gloved hands full between saving the lives of archaeologists/inventors and battling it out with the Scarab's men.

Something of a departure from the original comic-book character, Captain America not only looked different but was also lacking his comic-strip pal, Bucky. Nevertheless, this 15-chapter actioner was a delight to serial fans when it was first released in 1944.



graphy captures some superb crowd and action scenes early on, when the party is in Siam, including an exciting battle sequence. Included also are some fast and furious fist-fights, wherein Captain Marvel not only beats the bad guys unconscious but also manages to demolish entire sets. An excellent actioner.

Next, from Columbia, came *Batman* (1943), in the shape of 15 action-filled chapters. Under the skillful direction of veteran Lambert Hillyer, *Batman* was very much an American propaganda vehicle against what was then their bitter enemy, the Japanese.

Most of the serial sees *Batman*, played by Lewis Wilson, and Robin, essayed by Douglas Croft, battle the evil Japanese spy-ring leader, Dr Daka (*J. Carrol Naish*), whose idea of fun is transforming people into mindless zombies or feeding them to his pet alligator. Chapter 15 has a delicately destructive battle in Daka's under-

Doctor Daka is despatched into the alligator pit.

ground headquarters, in which the deadly Doctor is fed to his own alligators.

Batman, however, is only borderline sf by way of involving mind controlling devices (reminiscent of *Buck Rogers*) to create zombies, stolen radium and various pseudo-scientific gadgetry. In 1949, Columbia turned their serial-producing department to the *Batman*-Robin duo again, with *Batman* and Robin. With this one the heroes go through much the same paces again, only this time the villain is called "The Wizard" and he has stolen a strange remote-control machine from an eccentric professor. Crazy inventors and remote-control devices seemed to be the serial scriptwriters' favourite plot themes. Curious how no one ever questioned the purpose of inventing these oddball

The Great Alaskan Mystery, courtesy of Universal, in 1944, deserves some mention as part of the sf cliffhanger fold in that the story revolves around another invention—the deadly Peratron. A sort of death ray, the Peratron is intended as a defence weapon for the nation. The bad guys are out to prevent an expeditionary party from gaining the vital ore from an old Alaskan mine to make the death-ray perfect. Chases, fights, shipwrecks, plane-crashes, they're all here—making *The Great Alaskan Mystery* one of the most enjoyable of the action serials.

In 1945, Republic released what must be the first true sf serial—*The Purple Monster Strikes*. Not unlike the later Fifties feature entries, the chapterplay begins with an astronomer (and inventor, of course) spotting something like a meteor landing nearby. The astronomer goes out to investigate and meets a man



from Mars (*Roy Barcroft*). The Martian kills the scientist because the man has invented a spaceship that will enable people to journey between the planets, and the alien is paving the way for a full-scale invasion of Earth. Naturally, there are a number of items required for completion of the spaceship, so the title character must go out and get them! This takes up the major part of the serial. However, the interesting part is that the Purple Monster is able to enter the bodies of his victims and assume their identities.

More "space-age" gadgetry was noticeable in the serials.

By this time, more and more "space-age" gadgetry was becoming noticeable in the sf serials. The Cyclotrode, a counter-atomic weapon which had the power to short circuit all electric current in the area, was the central plot device in *The*



Crimson Ghost (1946). Atom bombs and atomic-powered engines were popular in *The Black Widow* (Republic, 1947), along with spider-poison killings. Atomic motors in the aviation field formed a basis for the action in Columbia's *Jack Armstrong* (1947), leading to cosmic radioactivity and the threat of world destruction.

A "crystal door" features in *Brick Bradford* (1947), which enables one to be transported to the moon. Dr Tymak has invented an anti-guided missile weapon called the Interceptor Ray for which he

Superman battles Luthor—who is threatening to destroy the city.

requires a substance known as Lunarium. He and his party journey to the moon, via his crystal door, and are captured by the Lunarians. At this point things start to get complicated, and our hero Brick Bradford has to use a time-travel craft, the Time-Top, to get back to 18th century Central America to fulfill a sub-plot. Eventually, all things are put to right and everyone ends up in the right place at the right time.

In 1948, Spencer Bennet and Thomas Carr directed the first Superman serial for Columbia. For 15 chapters Superman, following his arrival from Krypton as an infant battles the evil Spider-Lady (a performance of delicious evil by Carol Forman). She threatens to destroy an entire city and kill Superman with a fragment of Kryptonite, but the Man of Steel finally wins and, with her own reducing-ray, kills the villainess.

Director Thomas Carr went on to work on the *Superman* tv show of the 1950s, while Spencer Bennet returned with another Superman serial two years later, *Atom Man vs Superman*. This time Superman battles Luthor—actually the Atom Man of the title—who is busy threatening to destroy Metropolis. More diabolical machinery and Kryptonite is involved, but once again the forces of evil are routed and Superman returns to being the meek Clark Kent.

Both serials featured Kirk Alyn as the Man of Steel, with Noel Neill playing Lois. When the second *Superman* tv series started in the 1950s, Noel Neill returned to the Lois Lane role.

King of the Rocket Men, produced by Republic in 1949, features Tristram Coffin as young hero, Jeff King—also known as the Rocket Man. Moving along at a fairly brisk pace, this serial contains even more crazed villains, inventive scientists and diabolical schemes.

The sinister Dr Vulcan is after various death-dealing devices created at the laboratories of Science Associates. Professor Millard (*James Craven*) and King have invented a rocket-propelled flying suit, with which King becomes a mysterious avenger to combat the evil forces of Dr Vulcan. Vulcan, at one point, steals



a disintegrating machine and holds New York to ransom. Needless to say, the authorities refuse to give in so Vulcan creates an earthquake and a tidal wave in New York harbour. Eventually, Vulcan and his gang are located and a squadron of bombers destroys the entire group.

The serial-producing companies—Republic and Columbia—worked on the

The Rocket Man flying suit was used again and again.

fastest possible schedules and the most economic of budgets. Props and gadgets turned up again and again in various cliff-hangers. The Tin Man like robots from *Undersea Kingdom* were in use for over 16 years, for example. So, too, was the Rocket Man flying suit used again, in *Radar Men from the Moon* and *Zombies of the Stratosphere* (both 1952 productions).

Radar Men from the Moon cast George

Wallace as Commando Cody and Aline Towne as his assistant, Joan, who travel to the moon in order to prevent the conquest of Earth by Retik, ruler of the moon. The concluding chapter sees, following a series of volcanic eruptions, rocket ship chases and other assorted hazards, Cody blast Retik's ship to pieces. In 1953, Republic made a follow-up series for tv called *Commando Cody, Sky Marshal of the Universe*, starring Judd Holdren as Cody and Aline Towne as Joan. This one, however, never reached the small screen and was released directly to the cinemas as a 12-part serial. Going through pretty much the same procedure again, this tv production featured such episodes as *Robot Monster of Mars*, *Solar Sky Riders* and *SOS Ice Age*.

Judd Holdren and Aline Towne teamed up—before tv's *Commando Cody*—for *Zombies of the Stratosphere*, with Holdren playing a member of the Inter-

Planetary Patrol. The outrageous plot centres around a scheme to blow Earth out of its orbit and replace it with another planet. To put this weird plan into action, two Zombie aliens, Marex (Lane Bradford) and Narab (Leonard Nomoy, some 14 years before *Star Trek*), land on Earth and set about constructing a Hydrogen bomb. In no time at all, Judd Holdren and his flying suit are in action, battling Zombies, gangsters and an "Iron Monster" (another *Undersea Kingdom* refugee). At the last moment, after a hectic ray-gun battle, Holdren kills everyone except Narab, and manages to defuse the Hydrogen bomb in the nick of time.

A character known as the Phantom Ruler is the central villain in *The Invisible Monster* (Republic, 1950). He has the ability to make himself invisible by a combination of chemicals and special light-rays. Most of the 12 chapters are taken up with the almost routine fights and chases between an insurance investigator and the Phantom Ruler mob. There is one interesting—if not enjoyable—part where the Phantom's henchmen attempt to rescue one of their number, after going

Flying Disc Man from Mars involves yet another alien.

to great pains to locate him, but find the man too weak from a wound to be moved—so they empty their guns into him and make a hasty retreat.

Based on the DuMont Network's 1949 *Captain Video* and his *Video Rangers* tv series, Columbia produced a 15-chapter *Captain Video* serial in 1951. Featuring Judd Holdren as the title character, this cliffhanger hoped to score on the popularity of the tv show. However, for all its ray-guns, rocketships and (more) gadgets, it remains unremarkable as a big-screen serial offering. Regarding the tv version, between February and December, 1951, Fawcett Publications issued six interesting comic-books to tie-in with the series.

Flying Disc Man from Mars involves another malevolent alien, Martian scientist, Mota, who enlists the aid of a crooked Earth scientist to build a squadron of atomic-powered planes with which to overthrow Earth forces. More chases, fist and gun fights, culminating in Mota's volcano hideout blowing up in a spectacular finale. Nothing much to distinguish this from any of the other early Fifties sf chapterplays, except maybe the presence of an atom-powered space craft which is capable of flying in all directions without turning, hovering motionless and defying gravity.

Taking the famous Jules Verne story and giving it to Columbia's serial script-writers—Lewis Clay, Royal K. Cole and George H. Plympton—resulted in the 15-chapter *Mysterious Island*. From the middle of chapter one Verne's story starts fading away and an all-out-action cliffhanger emerges. By chapter two, the

Opposite: *The true villain of Atom Man vs Superman* (1950) was Lex Luthor. Below: After his serial success as *Superman* Kirk Alyn went on to play the title role in *Blackhawk* (1952). Right: *Commando Cody* takes to the air in *Zombies of the Stratosphere* (1952).



Mercurians have landed and Captain Nemo has made an appearance. From this point our heroes, the castaways, have to duck and dodge between the Mercurians, a strange Captain Nemo, an ex-pirate who is now a "wild man", various hostile natives and witch doctors and a group of not-so-friendly buccaners. The Columbia advertising of the time hailed *Mysterious Island* as "Out-of-this-World Serial Thrills as Mercury Space Ships Zoom into This World". Anybody wishing to see an accurate version of Jules Verne's fabulous story is recommended to go elsewhere. But if one wants to enjoy a crazy cliffhanger with plenty of twists and turns, then this Columbia "Super-Serial" is where the action is.

On the comic-book page, *Blackhawk* first appeared in 1944. As a cinema serial, *Blackhawk* appeared in 1952. With ex-Superman Kirk Alyn taking the title role this serial fares somewhat better than some hardcore comic fans may give credit for. Under the directorial helm of Spencer Bennet, *Blackhawk* pits the



International Brotherhood (a sort of justice organisation) against the lethal female Laska and her band of saboteurs. Naturally, in the centre of the steal-and-recapture format there is a powerful electronic ray device, created by a supposedly benevolent scientist.

The plot of *Canadian Mounties vs Atomic Invaders* features a group of foreign agents preparing to launch a rocket attack on America and Canada, but a more exciting sf chapterplay—made the same year (1953)—was *The Lost Planet*. Here we have a "cosmojet" landing on the side of a volcano. This strange craft contains Dr Grood (*Michael Fox*), a scientist from the planet Ergo, who has the popular plan of conquering the

The competition from tv proved too much for the serials.

Universe. Following a few kidnappings and ray-gun assassination attempts, our hero, played to the hilt by Judd Holdren (back by popular demand?), is hot on the trail. The activities throughout *The Lost Planet* are particularly violent, and the head-villain has an exceptionally sadistic disposition. When, in the final chapter, he is despatched by the hero it is justifiably gruesome: Dr Grood, escaping, sets off into space and his robot, inadvertently, sets the ship's controls for "Infinity".

1953 saw the release of the last of the sf serials and, just three years later, the last ever chapterplay was produced. The new competition of television proved too much for the serial factories and tv became, in fact, a new form of chapterplay, offering weekly installments of episodic adventures for the masses. A lot of what the serial companies created during their reign can be seen in the 1950s sf cinema and in tv even today—a legacy of bizarre plots and Adventure with a capital A.

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